Hafa Adai!

Tenorio gets 'good' performance rating from Bar Association. PAGE 3
'Revocation, payments, others still being negotiated' PAGE 4

$1

Saipan Tribune

THE CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER

Volume XXXIV, Issue No. 18

www.saipantribune.com | THURSDAY JANUARY 25, 2024 | www.facebook.com/saipantribune

4 dogs are shot; 2 killed

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

One of the dogs that was shot and killed yesterday.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The dog died even after valiant efforts were made to save it at the Saipan Humane Society.

By LEIGH GASES
leigh_gases@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

In an attack whose motives remain unknown as yet, four dogs on Saipan have been shot since last Friday, with two of the animals succumbing to their injuries.

One of the dogs, owned by Mario Taitano, died yesterday due to its injuries from a gunshot wound, even after valiant efforts were made to

See DOGS on Page 4

EVS-TAP is saving grace for the CNMI's China market

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Concepcion

Because it's a permanent CNMI-only visa waiver program specific to Chinese tourists, the long-awaited establishment of the CNMI Economic Vitality & Security Travel Authorization Program is a saving grace for the CNMI's China market, according to Marianas Visitors Authority managing director Chris Concepcion.

Speaking at a news briefing yesterday, Concepcion, who was previously pessimistic about the revocation of the China discretionary parole program, shared his excitement about the establishment of

See MARKET on Page 4

3 rescued following fishing trip gone wrong

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

First responders managed to save three individuals who were reported missing at sea after what they expected to be a fun fishing trip went awry

See RESCUED on Page 4

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Department of Fire and Emergency Medical Services and local community members are seen aiding in the search for three missing fishermen yesterday.

Camacho meets with Rota public education stakeholders

PSS

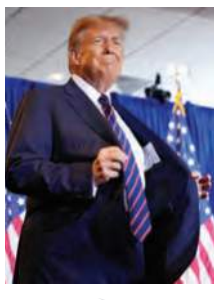
Education Commissioner Dr. Lawrence Camacho visited and engaged with Rota's Sinapalo Elementary School's fifth grade mathematics class of teacher Emmylou Hocog Tuesday afternoon.

Soon after coming on board, Education Commissioner Dr. Lawrence Camacho launched a "listening tour" that brought him to Rota last Tuesday, during which he visited and met with public education stakeholders at both Sinapalo Elementary School and Dr. Rita Hocog Inos Junior Senior High School.

Camacho, who was accompanied by Special

See CAMACHO on Page 4

INSIDE



NATION

Former President Donald Trump easily won New Hampshire's primary on Tuesday, seizing command of the race for the Republican nomination.

PAGE 12

WORLD

The mood of the Israeli public is shifting after more than 100 days of war in Gaza–and the catalyst is a rift over the polarizing leadership of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

PAGE 13

LIFE & STYLE

After a tumultuous movie year marked by strikes and work stoppages, the Academy Awards showered nominations Tuesday on Christopher Nolan's blockbuster biopic, "Oppenheimer."

PAGE 15

SCAN ME WITH A COMPATIBLE QR READER TO KEEP UPDATED ON ALL THE LATEST NEWS.

Local

Rotary Club succeeds in its inaugural Student Program

By CHRYSTAL MARINO
chrystal_marino@saipantribune.com
CORRESPONDENT

CHRYSTAL MARINO

From left, students Sara Elizabeth Keaton, Jia Ross Nicado, Kelly Zheng, and Jayden Shin stand with Rotarian John Arroyo for a photo after their presentation at the Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan in Garapan last Tuesday.

Closing off the first Rotary Club of Saipan Student Program yesterday, the last four of nine student participants shared their experiences and thanks to the Rotary Club during the club's weekly meeting last Tuesday at the Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan.

Sara Elizabeth Keaton, Jia Ross Nicado, Kelly Zheng, and Jayden Shin all shared that their experiences left them not only enlightened but encouraged.

Nicado, who is interested in law, told Rotarians that she learned so much from her mentor. "At the end of this interview I felt motivated to learn all that I can about law, and it ignited a stronger spark within me to give back to my community. After meeting with such amazing interviewers and having a fun time in their offices, I understood that anyone…has an opportunity to succeed and prepare for my upcoming future," she said.

Shin shared his interest in engineering and said that in his interview with a Guam network provider, he was able to ask his questions and learn more. "I feel like I really learned a lot. It was a really cool program that I was just so thankful to be a part of it."

Zheng, a junior at Marianas High School, told Rotarians that she used to have doubts about pursuing a career in computer engineering. "I've always questioned myself: 'Do I really want to learn computer engineering and know what it is' but…after yesterday's interview, I can firmly say that computer engineering is what I want to pursue. To put it simply I learned and enjoyed and treasured this experience. "

Keaton, who is interested in filmmaking, said she felt honored to have Emmy Award-winning filmmaker Steve McCarthy as a mentor. "Our conversations not only covered the technical aspects of filmmaking but also highlighted the significance of resilience and determination in pursuing a career in this dynamic field. Steve's mentorship has equipped me not only with technical knowledge but has also inspired me to approach storytelling with passion and perseverance," she said

Rotarian John Arroyo, who was a key player in the Rotary Club of Saipan Student Program, said it was specially designed to pair career-driven students with professionals who are already living their career dreams.

"We set up interviews where the students are able to meet with the professionals who will become their mentors and ask them questions of their experience and any advice on anything that will prepare them…to get ready for whatever it is they need to do to, whatever challenges that are ahead of them in order to get to the position where their mentor is at," Arroyo said.

The program was open to students ages 15-18.

Arroyo said this effort is part of the Rotary Club International's endeavors, and he is very happy that they were able to begin the program here for the first time and do so successfully.

"Because it's our first year in doing this, we didn't want to bite off more than we can chew. We wanted to make sure that we kept it…small, so that if there were any kinks or anything that could potentially ruin the program, we would be able to work through with a small group. So we selected two schools to be our pilot schools: Marianas High School and Mount Carmel School. At the beginning of the school year, we met the school administrators and we introduced the program to them, and asked if they would be interested in promoting the program to their kids at school and both schools loved it. They thought it was great and wholeheartedly went for it," Arroyo said, adding that the Rotary Club of Saipan would like to make the program yearly, and make it accessible to all schools on island.

Arroyo also noted that several mentors have also given him great feedback during the interviews, and that one of the beauties of the program was the lifelong relationships being established.

"Everybody, including all of the mentors, have agreed to remain in contact with their student, which is great and so when they need any help or advice, there's these experts that are standing nearby," he said.

He believes the Rotary Club of Saipan was able to accomplish what it wanted to accomplish with the program. "I think overall it was a great experience for the kids. Great exposure for them, and also for our mentors, especially the ones that are here. And that's evident because mentors have agreed to remain in contact with the students that they have interviewed. …I think overall it was great opportunity and something that's very beneficial to the island."

DOUBLE BIG MAC®
limited time | bigger & better!
Coca-Cola
Store Hours
Chalan Pale Arnold Road
Open Daily for Dine-In & Drive-Thru
6 AM - 10 PM | (670) 235-8577
Garapan Express
Open Daily for Dine-In & Drive-Thru
24 Hours | (670) 233-8577
Limited time. Served after 10:30 am ©2024 McDonald's

First responders find missing windsurfer

KIMBERLY B. ESMORES

Local first responders launched a search for a reported missing windsurfer at Micro Beach last Tuesday. Fortunately, after a few hours of searching, the man was found alive.

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

First responders successfully located last Tuesday a windsurfer who had been reported missing at Micro Beach.

The Department of Public Safety's Boating Safety Unit, Department of Fire and Emergency Medical Services, and the U.S Coast Guard sprang into action and launched the search for the windsurfer who was reported missing off the coast of Micro Beach near the Hyatt Regency Saipan. Fortunately, the man was found alive after a few hours of search.

According to bystanders, the man, believed to be a guest at the Hyatt, was seen windsurfing but they soon lost sight of him after few moments.

According to DFEMS spokesperson Rob Mojica, the man was found at around 7pm.

DPS has yet to issue a statement on the matter.

Tenorio gets 'good' performance rating from NM Bar Association

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Northern Marianas Bar Association evaluation results have come out, giving judicial nominee Lillian Ada Tenorio a "good" rating in her performance.

Sen. Celina R. Babauta (D-Saipan), who chairs the Senate Executive Appointments and Government Investigations, disclosed during yesterday's confirmation hearing for Tenorio in the Senate chamber that the committee had received the Northern Marianas Bar Association's recent evaluation results.

Babauta said the evaluation was conducted according to the Bar Association's "resolution to establish and implement a procedure for evaluation of judicial nominees and candidates for judicial retention."

According to the evaluation results, of approximately 163 active attorneys in the Bar Association, there are 92 with active status in the Commonwealth.

Babauta said on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being the lowest rating and 5 being the highest, the results of the survey indicate that Tenorio received an average rating of 4.15.

Tenorio was rated in four categories: legal ability, integrity and impartiality, communication skills, and professionalism and temperament.

"She scored highest in the integrity and impartiality category," said Babauta, referring to the 4.3 average score that Tenorio received.

The results also show that the nominee received a 4.1 average score in the legal ability category, 4 in communication skills, and 4 in professionalism and temperament.

Tenorio is being nominated as a Superior Court associate judge.

The Bar Association rated Tenorio's performance on a scale of "Unacceptable" (Seldom meets minimum standards of performance); "Deficient" (Does not always meet minimum standards of performance); "Acceptable" (Meets minimum standards of performance); "Good" (Often exceeds minimum standards of performance); and "Excellent" (Consistently exceeds minimum standards of performance).

NM Bar Association president Charity Hodson informed association members on Tuesday that the evaluation survey period closed on Jan. 22, 2024, with 33 surveys submitted.

Hodson said the number of responders who supported Tenorio's nomination is 28, while four were opposed. One responder did not support or oppose the nomination.

Babauta said the committee also received written letters of support for Tenorio's nomination from Joeten Enterprises Inc. president Annie Tenorio Sablan, Attorney General Edward Manibusan, Tinian resident Arsene Borja, Tinian Mayor Edwin P. Aldan, and lawyers Hodson, Michael Ernest, Lucia Blanco Maratita, and Viola Alepuyo in their personal capacities.

Babauta said the committee did not receive any letter opposing Tenorio's nomination.

Gov. Arnold I. Palacios nominated Tenorio on Nov. 22, 2023, to serve as the 20th associate judge of the NMI Superior Court and the fourth female appointed to the office.

Tenorio, who was later allowed to speak at the public hearing, said she is humbled by the confidence that Palacios and Lt. Gov. David M. Apatang have placed in her and that she has carefully considered this calling to a new role in government.

Tenorio said she has been blessed to have wonderful teachers, supervisors, influencers throughout her life. She acknowledged her siblings and many other people who were present at the hearing, including her first grade teacher, Chailang Palacios, whom she described as a "cultural icon." Tenorio said it was Chailang Palacios who taught her and her classmates in first grade how to draw a barracuda with the No. 5.

"I will show that later," said Tenorio drawing laughter from the audience in the Senate chamber and lobby.

The deputy AG later answered several questions raised by committee members.

During public comments portion of the hearing, former Marianas Public Land Trust board chair Martin Ada cited Tenorio's vast experience in law enforcement and the legal system in saying that all the basic points of qualification for her nomination has been set. Ada and Tenorio are first cousins.

Lawyer Michael White said he has been practicing law in the Commonwealth for 54 years and has known Tenorio for many years.

"I've had the opportunity to observe her in professional as well as personal settings. I believe she'd be an outstanding judge and I strongly recommend her confirmation by this committee and by the Senate," White said.

Former lawmaker Christina Marie E. Sablan said she had the opportunity to work directly with Tenorio in her role as deputy attorney general in providing legal advice to the governor's office, as well as in her role representing the Office of the Attorney General in reviewing and commenting on legislation.

Sablan said Tenorio has always been fair, constructive in her criticism, well versed in the law, and ethical to her core.

"She's also very funny and I personally think that a sense of humor is an essential attribute in any occupation and perhaps especially so in the practice of law," Sablan said.

She said she can say without reservation and full confidence that Tenorio will bring to the judiciary her characteristic wit, her integrity and intelligence and her faithful commitment to the law and public service.

Others who spoke to support Tenorio's nomination were Customs director Jose C. Mafnas, Carolinian Affairs' Felix Nogis, and Donna Flores of the Public School System.

PROCUREMENT SERVICES • CNMI GOVERNMENT
INVITATION TO BID
ITB NO.: ITB24-BECQ/TIN-42400034

SUBMISSION DATE: FEBRUARY 27, 2024 TIME: 09:00 A.M.

"OFFICE SPACE LEASE FOR BECQ ON TINIAN"

COPIES OF THE SPECIFICATIONS MAY BE OBTAINED ON THE MUNIS VENDOR SELF SERVICE PORTAL (https://selfservice.dof.gov.mp/vss/) OR AT THE OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF PROCUREMENT SERVICES, LOCATED AT BLDG NO. 12552, ANATAHAN DRIVE, CAPTIOL HILL, SAIPAN, DURING REGULAR WORKING HOURS.

QUESTIONS REGARDING THIS ITB CAN BE MADE TO THE BUREAU OF ENVIRONMENTAL & COASTAL QUALITY BY FEBRUARY 14, 2024, TO MRS. ZABRINA S. CRUZ VIA EMAIL AT zabrina.shai@becq.gov.mp

THE PROVISIONS OF THE CNMI PROCUREMENT REGULATIONS, NMIAC SECTION 70-30.3-725 AND 70-30.3-730 PROHIBITING GRATUITIES, KICKBACKS AND CONTINGENT FEES SHALL APPLY.

THE CNMI GOVERNMENT RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY OR ALL BIDS, OR PORTIONS THEREOF, AND WAIVE IMMATERIAL DEFECTS IF TO DO SO WOULD BE IN THE BEST INTEREST OF THE CNMI GOVERNMENT.

/S/ RICHARD V. SALAS
ACTING ADMINISTRATOR, BECQ

/S/ BRIEN S. NICHOLAS JR.
ACTING DIRECTOR, PS

COMMONWEALTH UTILITIES CORPORATION

INVITATION FOR BIDS
CUC-IFB-24-005

OFFICE SPACE LEASE FOR CUC ROTA's ADMINISTRATIVE FUNCTIONS & OPERATIONS

The Office of the Executive Director for the Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC), is soliciting competitive sealed bids for the lease of a suitable office and operations support facility for the Headquarters of CUC's Administration and Operations on the island of Rota, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

The proposed office space must comply with American Disabilities Act (ADA), DPW, OSHA and CNMI Zoning regulation.

The IFB package may be obtained at the CUC Procurement and Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, Saipan, between 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on government observed holidays, upon completion of registration with CUC Procurement & Supply Division. The IFB package will be emailed to the registered Proponents email ID. For registration inquiries, please email Marcela Tenorio, CUC Senior Administrative Technician via email address, marcela.tenorio@cucgov.org.

One (1) original and Five (5) hard copies must be submitted in a sealed envelope marked *"CUC-IFB-24-005, Office Space Lease for CUC Rota's Administrative Functions and Operations."* to the CUC Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950, **no later than 10:00 AM (ChST) on February 9, 2024,** at which time they will be publicly opened and read aloud. Bids mailed via postal or courier service must be received on or before due date and time or post-marked before submission deadline. Late submissions and conditional offers will not be considered.

Bidders are required to comply with all CNMI and applicable Federal Laws. This bid and the ensuing contract shall be executed pursuant to the CUC Procurement Regulations.

This Invitation for Bids does not commit CUC to the award of a contract or contracts, nor to pay any cost incurred in the preparation and submission of bids in anticipation of a contract. Bidders are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the bidders due to lack of information or understanding of the bid requirements in the course of Contractor's preparation of a bid under the contract.

Questions or requests for clarification will be entertained only from registered Proponents and must be submitted in writing no later than 10:00 AM (ChST) on January 18, 2024 to Manny B. Sablan, CUC Purchasing Administrator via email address manny.sablan@cucgov.org with a copy to Alvin King, CUC Rota Resident Manager at email address alvin.king@cucgov.org and Marcela Tenorio at marcela.tenorio@cucgov.org.

CUC reserves the right to reject any or all bids and waive any imperfection in the bid proposal in the best interest of the government. All bids shall become the property of CUC.

BETTINA G. TERLAJE
Acting Executive Director

MANNY B. SABLAN
Purchasing Administrator

18TH CNMI STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
EMERGENCY BOARD MEETING
Friday, January 26, 2024, at 1:30 p.m.
Board of Education Conference Room
Building 1241, Capitol Hill, Saipan
Via Zoom (see link below)

AGENDA[1]

I. **Preliminary**
1. Call to Order
2. Roll Call
3. Adoption of Agenda

II. **Public Comments**[2]

III. **New Business**
1. Early Intervention Program, Part C, State Performance Plan (SPP), and Annual Performance Report (APR)
2. PSS Grievance/Personnel Matters

IV. **Executive Session**[3]
1. Legal Counsel's Report
2. Personnel
3. Other matters

V. **Miscellaneous**

VI. **Discussion of the Agenda for the next Board Meeting**

VII. **Adjournment**

[1] **Join Zoom Meeting**
https://zoom.us/j/98420878753?pwd=aWd0bXNlUDVzdTV6WjRxUkNObIJJUT09
Meeting ID: 984 2087 8753
Passcode: 943765

[2] Pursuant to BOE Policy 0415, public comments are limited to 30 minutes. We ask that remarks be limited to 3 minutes each. Everyone is welcome to submit written comments.

[3] Pursuant to 1 CMC § 9912, the Board may vote to meet in executive session at any time.

JOB VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

Accounting Manager (Saipan, MP)

Prepares budget-related reports and analysis. Compiles and updates service agreements and contracts with customers, agents, suppliers and the like for the purpose of ensuring the correctness and validity of rates and terms being used. 40 hrs/wk F/T.

Must have Bachelor's degree in Accounting or equivalent plus two years of experience as Senior Accountant, Accountant, Auditor, or any suitable combination of education, training, or experience is acceptable.

Mail resume to Consolidated Transportation Services, Inc., CTSI Building, Santa Remedio, Lower Base, Saipan, MP 96950. Attn: Joven Cruz, GM.

‘Revocation, payments, others still being negotiated’

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Imperial Pacific International (CNMI) LLC has requested the Commonwealth Casino Commission board to suspend conducting a hearing to revoke IPI’s exclusive casino license, which was set for this coming Wednesday, Jan. 31.

Chi

In response to *Saipan Tribune*’s inquiry, IPI manager/director Howyo Chi said yesterday that they are still negotiating with CCC regarding revocation hearing, payments, and other issues.

“There have been many proposals back and forth but nothing concrete,” Chi said. He did not elaborate.

CCC board acting chair Rafael Demapan set the board’s monthly meeting this Tuesday, a day before the scheduled revocation hearing, at the Springs Plaza Building in Gualo Rai.

Demapan included in the meeting’s agenda a preliminary stipulation that asks for the dismissal or stay in the casino license revocation hearing.

He also included in the agenda a preliminary stipulation that requires an order lifting the CCC’s order dated April 22, 2021, suspending IPI’s casino license.

IPI failed to pay some $62 million in casino license fees it owes the CNMI government by the Dec. 30, 2023 deadline.

CAMACHO

From page 1

Education director Donna M. Flores, held conversations with teachers, staff and personnel, and students of both schools. Flores was interim Education chief prior to Camacho’s appointment in Jan. 8, 2024.

“I am really here to see the good things that are taking place in this beautiful community. I know we all have been through obstacles and challenges like any schools out there. This is the reason why I am here today, as part of my first 100 days in office is to listen to you, to talk to you, and gather data that will guide me in serving you and all of our public education stakeholders,” Camacho told staff and personnel of both schools.

Principals Daisy Quitugua of Sinapalo Elementary School and Annette Calvo of Dr. Rita Hocog Inos Junior Senior High School led their school’s staff and personnel in the meet-and-greet session with Camacho. Close to 200 school personnel were in attendance.

“Our conversation today is because we want to include you in the process of moving forward with our plans and initiatives for our Public School System. This continuum of direction is the approach that your commissioner of Education, with the support of our [Board of Education], will take on,” Camacho added, as he recognized Rota’s education staff and personnel for its great talents and expertise.

“Because a lot of my plan will come from all of you, we want to include you in the process,” Camacho added.

‘Thank you’

BOE chair Herman M. Atalig, who is the Rota representative to the policymaking and governing body of PSS, welcomed Camacho on his first visit to Rota.

“Commissioner, your Rota school community welcomes you and is excited to meet with you,” Atalig said. “Thank you for visiting Rota.”

Camacho also visited several classrooms and had one-on-one conversations with school personnel. He praised the Sinapalo Elementary School and Dr. Rita Hocog Inos Junior Senior High School personnel for their hard work and commitment.

In the Instructional Technology and Distance Education class of teacher Angeline Guiao, Camacho told the students they are the reason why PSS continues to serve this community.

“Thank you for motivating our students, in making sure that they come to school to learn every day,” he said.

Camacho advised students that PSS “will continue to help graduate and pursue college, or whatever you pursue after high school.”

“Just keep those ‘As’; those good grades,” added Camacho. ***(PSS)***

DOGS

From page 1

save it at the Saipan Humane Society clinic in As Perdido.

SHS executive director Lauren Cabrera urges dog owners to confine their dogs to their properties and keep a close eye on them.

She urged those with injured dogs to bring them to the SHS clinic at the Saipan Mayor’s Office Animal Shelter in As Perdido during their operation hours. Check their social media accounts for their hours of operation.

“For any dogs which are dangers or nuisances to the community, please report them to the Saipan Mayor’s Dog Control Program rather than taking the matter into your own hands,” said Cabrera.

According to Public Law 21-31, the Animal Protection Act, it is illegal to mistreat, injure, abandon, or neglect animals. See link: https://cnmilaw.org/pdf/public_laws/21/pl21-31.pdf

Rep. Edwin K. Propst (D-Saipan), who created animal cruelty laws with Humane Society International, said he was informed “that at least four dogs have been shot in recent days. This is absolutely horrific and unacceptable. I’ve seen the photos and videos of these poor dogs being shot and cannot believe this is happening in our peaceful community. If you know who is shooting these poor dogs, please speak up and report it to the police.”

Taitano, in an interview yesterday, said he’s filed a report with the Department of Public Safety. He apologizes to whoever shot his dogs, but said that it didn’t have to be that way. He said there are animal cruelty laws for a reason.

“If they were in any way disturbing or a nuisance, just shoo them away—do not shoot,” said Taitano. The former lawmaker and current director of the Commonwealth Casino Commission said Harley, his black dog who died, along with his other dog, went missing four or five days ago. His other dog is still alive after also suffering gunshot wounds and hopes she will pull through.

In a separate news release, Cabrera said that even if you don’t care for dogs, this type of cruelty is a big red flag and should concern people.

“Multiple studies have shown that those who intentionally hurt animals are more prone to doing the same to humans—especially toward the vulnerable such as in the case of child abuse, elder abuse, and domestic violence,” she said.

She quoted a 2017 study that showed that “89% of women who had companion animals during an abusive relationship reported that their animals were threatened, harmed, or killed by their abusive partner.” Read the study here: https://aldf.org/article/the-link-between-cruelty-to-animals-and-violence-toward-humans-2/.

Cabrera thanked the Saipan’s DCP for transporting the injured dog to the clinic.

For any information on those who may be shooting dogs, contact Taitano at (670) 287-0251; animal advocate Aria Kielbach of Boonie Babies at (719) 214-7064; or Martin Pangelinan, manager of Saipan’s DCP at 670 783-1678.

SHS’ contact is (670) 838-7387 and their website is www.saipanhumanesociety.org/.

MARKET

From page 1

EVS-TAP, stating that it’s the saving grace for the CNMI’s China market.

“It’s exciting news to see that the U.S. government has essentially made what has historically been called, even if it isn’t, the China visa waiver program. It’s going to become a permanent program for visa-free access for visitors from the People’s Republic of China to the CNMI through EVS-TAP that’s being vetted by the U.S. government. This is the saving grace for the China market,” he said.

The EVS-TAP, which is a CNMI-only program, will require the screening of inbound visitors prior to their departure from China.

The program was created last week after the U.S Department of Homeland Security issued an interim final ruling that outlines the rules that all incoming visitors from China must comply with before they are allowed entry into the CNMI.

Concepcion previously said that removing the discretionary parole program that was being used to allow Chinese tourists to enter the CNMI would be detrimental to the CNMI’s tourism industry. Now, with the creation of the EVS-TAP that will replace it, he said this means good things for the CNMI in terms of economic recovery, especially starting in March, which will see the return of Hong Kong Airlines.

Concepcion said MVA, just like the CNMI business community, fully supports the establishment of the program.

“We are very eager to have access to all markets around the world, especially in east Asia. It’s really Japan, Korea, and China that have been the dominant markets throughout our history and so we are excited about the prospects of these programs being catalyst for future growth of the tourism industry,” he said.

Although the program is still in the works, MVA said the EVS-TAP is believed to be similar to the “ESTA” program that Japan and Korean passport holders are able to apply for to enter the United States.

“We are hoping that this new program for the Chinese visitors is going to be similar. We’ll see. The regulations are still being worked out as we speak, so we are assuming its going to be similar to the ‘ESTA’ program. It’s a very simple program. We’re hoping it’s similar in the sense that approval takes place instantly or within 24 hours,” he said.

As for any potential challenges, Concepcion said he is confident that DHS has the means to carry out the program with little challenge along the way.

“Maybe there will be some challenges. I assume, because it’s a new program, there may be some wrinkles and kinks that may need to be ironed out, but nothing too crazy. The ESTA program is very similar to this. You go online and apply for ESTA prior to entering or leaving Korea or Japan to the U.S., so I’m assuming DHS has the mechanism in place already and might just need to tweak it for this program. We don’t know, only time will tell. I can reasonably assume that there will be some trial and error as the program rolls out,” he said.

A longer version of this story is available at www. saipantribune.com

KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
Friends and family members of the three fishermen who were reported missing at sea yesterday afternoon are seen in this photo awaiting news from first responders. Fortunately the three fishermen have since been found and are reported alive and safe.

RESCUED

From page 1

yesterday afternoon.

The Department of Fire and Emergency Services, Department of Public Safety’s Boating Safety Unit, Division of Customs and Biosecurity, the U.S. military, and other community members were called to action yesterday in response to a report about three spearfishermen—Peter Pangelinan, Dillan Cruz, and Clifton Norita—who had gone missing at sea.

Fortunately, all three were located alive and safe past 4pm.

According to a DPS statement, the three, along with one other individual who was operating their boat, launched from Smiling Cove Marina before 9am, and headed for the pre-positioned ships just outside Saipan’s reef. Their boat was reportedly anchored behind one of the pre-positioned ships at around 12pm.

It was a little after lunch when the three were reported missing at sea.

“We got a call about three men unaccounted for out in the water. The three were out spearfishing by one of the pre-positioned ships,” said DPS.

According to DFEMS spokesperson Rob Mojica, two DPS Boating Safety boats, one Customs and Biosecurity boat, two DFEMS jet skis, one Navy helicopter, and a number of other private boats were launched from the Smiling Cove Marina in response.

“At 1:02pm, Boating Safety Unit stated that they were going to do a check around the pre-positioned ships for three possible missing fishermen,” he said.

Mojica said Boating Safety then located the three at around 4:31pm. The police declined to reveal details about the rescue, besides saying they’ve been found.

“At around 4:31pm, BSU stated over the radio that they have found the fishermen and were returning to the Smiling Cove Marina and requested for medical attention. Medic 2 from the Garapan Fire Station conducted vitals checks on all three fishermen and they said they were okay,” said Mojica.

The day before, on Tuesday Jan. 23, first responders also launched a search for a 60-year-old Japanese windsurfer who was reported missing at sea.

The man was reported missing by Saipan Seawind who rents out watersports equipment behind Hyatt Regency Saipan.

The man was found unharmed at around 7pm.

Students have 'Green' encounters at MTEC Tourism Summit

Nature came up close and personal for student members and chaperones of school MY WAVE—Marianas Youth Welcome All Visitors Enthusiastically—clubs at the Marianas Tourism Education Council Tourism Summit last Friday, Jan. 19.

In line with the theme "Green Spaces, Memorable Places/Kåmpun Betdi, Kåmpun Rikuetdu/Llingil Leyil Walúwal," approximately 300 attendees were bused to iconic tourism spots in the lush greenery of Marpi, Saipan, where guest speakers shared about various eco-tourism topics.

At Last Command Post students learned how to identify several bird species by sight and sound—including the Marianas Kingfisher and Marianas fruit dove—from Dr. Willson Gaul, who teaches biology at Northern Marianas College, and his team members Rabeya Aktar and April Lisua. Students were then given the opportunity to listen for bird calls themselves, and some caught a rare sight of the endangered Marianas fruit dove, a Micronesian starling, and other species.

At Bird Island Lookout, Run Saipan president Edward S. Dela Cruz Jr. drove home the importance of tourism for the students and their families and shared his experience and passion for racing and organizing race events in the Marianas for residents and visitors. To the delight of the participants, a pod of dolphins made a rare appearance at the iconic overlook during the summit.

With high winds pushing the ocean spray above the cliff line at dive site Banzai Cliff, PADI instructor Sydney Takahashi—the owner and operator of FishGuyz—taught students about different ways coral reefs can be damaged and encouraged the MY WAVE Club members to be ocean protectors.

"It was amazing! Working with the kids also taught me a lot," said Takahashi, who has worked as a dive instructor in both Saipan and Hawaii. "I wish they continue doing this…it's a very, very good program."

During the tour, select students served as tour guides on their respective buses, sharing information about the tour sites. The summit aimed to inspire students with information and activities focused on the Marianas' primary economic driver, tourism. This year's summit focused on the importance of trees, forests, and other natural green spaces, particularly with the desire of today's traveler for environmental conservation and physical, mental, and spiritual rejuvenation. Following the Marpi tours, students planted a total of 10 trees at Garapan Central Park and Sugar King Park, with the support of the Saipan Mayor's Office and the Department of Lands & Natural Resources Division of Agriculture.

"With the support of the Marianas Visitors Authority and the Hotel Association of the NMI, we were able to accommodate a large number of students in this year's MTEC Tourism Summit," said MTEC chair Vicky Benavente. "We're extremely grateful to the schools' club advisors, who have dedicated their time to help us teach about the importance of caring for our islands' natural resources."

At Garapan Central Park students also visited educational exhibits by American Memorial Park; Division of Fish & Wildlife Aquatic Education Program, Sea Turtle Conservation Program, and Fisheries Conservation & Management; Department of Land & Natural Resources enforcement officers; Marianas Visitors Authority; Northern Marianas College; Micronesian Islands Nature Alliance; Northern Marianas Museum of History & Culture; Northern Marianas Technical Institute; National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration; and U.S. Fish & Wildlife.

MTEC's outreach activities this school year are supported by the Hotel Association of the Northern Mariana Islands and the MVA.

For more information on MTEC or starting a school MY WAVE club, contact MVA Community Projects specialist Jack Aranda at jaranda@mymarianas.com or tel. no. (670) 664-3200/1. ***(MTEC)***

MTEC

Rabeya Aktar of Northern Marianas College teaches bird names and bird calls to students at Last Command Post in Marpi, Saipan, during the Marianas Tourism Education Council Tourism Summit on Jan. 19, 2024. The theme of this year's summit is "Green Spaces, Memorable Places/Kåmpun Betdi, Kåmpun Rikuetdu/Llingil Leyil Walúwal."

PROCUREMENT AND SUPPLY
COMMONWEALTH HEALTHCARE CORPORATION

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP)
FACILITY/PLANT OPERATIONS

RFP24-CHCC/FACILITY-008

SUBMISSION DEADLINE: February 26th, 2024 TIME: 10:00AM (CHST)

"FUEL, LUBRICATION AND TESTING SERVICES"

INTERESTED PARTIES CAN DOWNLOAD THIS **REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL** FROM THE CHCC WEBSITE [WWW.CHCC.HEALTH]. ONCE AT THE SITE, NAVIGATE TO REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS TAB ON THE LEFT NAVIGATION BAR. CLICK ON THE URL FOR THIS RFP. YOU WILL BE REQUIRED TO ENTER DATA TO ALLOW US TO TRACK ALL REQUESTS FOR THIS OPPORTUNITY.

THE CHCC RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY AND ALL PROPOSAL AND TO WAIVE ANY IMPERFECTIONS IN ANY PROPOSAL, IF TO DO SO SHALL BE IN THE INTEREST OF THE CHCC. ALL PROPOSALS SHALL BECOME THE EXCLUSIVE PROPERTY OF THE COMMONWEALTH HEALTHCARE CORPORATION.

/S/ ESTHER L. MUNA
CHCC CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

/S/ CORA P. ADA
DIRECTOR OF PROCUREMENT & SUPPLY

Commonwealth Utilities Corporation
P. O. Box 501220, Third Floor, Joeten Dandan Building, Saipan, MP 96950
Tel: (670) 664-4282 • Fax: (670) 235-5131

Job Vacancy Announcement

JVA No. 24-044

Opening Date: Monday, January 22, 2024
Closing Date: Friday, February 2, 2024

POSITION TITLE:	Administrative Technician, Senior
DEPARTMENT:	Power Division-Transmission & Distribution
LOCATION:	Saipan, Northern Mariana Islands, USA
ANNUAL SALARY:	$24,904.00 to $33,620.00 per annum, Non-Exempt
CONTRACT:	Not Contracted
POSITION(S):	One (1)

The incumbent will be under the direct supervision of the Power Division Manager or his/her designee.
The Administrative Technician, Senior provides administrative support services requiring a broad knowledge of the organization and provide specific support for designated organization cross-functions. Responsibilities as assigned may include preparing reports, drafting documents, staffing special projects, tracking budgets and expenditures, tracking project timelines and keeping schedules, preparing payroll, meeting agendas, and coordinating events.

Duties:
- Performs advanced office duties; organizes and maintains records; and prepares regulatory and other reports.
- Performs specialized, advanced office and administrative support activities of assigned division or specialty area; provides administrative support, coordination and project assistance to assigned management.
- Reviews, verifies, processes, prepares and distributes various documents, reports, contracts, change orders, timekeeping records, schedules, specifications, billing documents, and/or other departmental documentation.
- Provides internal and external customer service by responding to inquiries and information requests, contacting appropriate resources to gather pertinent information, and providing documents, information or specifications for required resources or services.
- Enters and maintains data in systems; retrieves and reviews system information; performs research as needed to gather pertinent data; reconciles errors or inconsistent data; makes applicable corrections and updates to maintain data integrity.
- Maintains and organizes files, databases, and records; ensures retention of information in accordance with procedures and guidelines.
- Assists in tracking budgets and expenditures, project timelines, schedules, and/or document processes; prepares and distributes status updates and document revisions.
- Reviewing and assigning work orders in system and job order.
- Maintains and prepares requisitions for inventory, supply and equipment needs; monitors and identifies resource needs.
- Performs other duties of a similar nature and level as assigned.

Minimum Requirements:
Education: Associate's Degree or, an equivalent combination of High School Diploma/GED or ABE Program AS plus three (3) years of office or customer service experience. Proficiency in the applications of Microsoft software – Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and Outlook.

Knowledge of: Applicable Federal, Commonwealth and local laws, codes, regulations and/or ordinances (based on assignment); Customer service principles; Filing and recordkeeping principles; Mathematical concepts; Inventory and supplies maintenance practices; Specialized equipment relevant to area of assignment; Modern office technology.

Skills in: Interpreting and applying applicable laws, codes, regulations and standards (based on assignment); Providing customer services, Filing, organizing, imaging and maintain records and files; Preparing reports, correspondence and documentation; Managing time and prioritizing requests; Providing attention to detail; Proofreading documents for accuracy; Performing audits, identifying errors and making corrections and recommendations; Reviewing and researching account or database information; Maintaining confidentiality of records and information; Utilizing a computer and relevant software applications; Utilizing communication and interpersonal skills as applied to interaction with co-workers, supervisor, the general public, and others to sufficiently exchange or convey information and to receive work direction.

Abilities: Must have **EXCELLENT WRITING** and **EDITING SKILLS** with the ability to communicate clearly and effectively with internal and external clients; Must be able to work occasional extra hours; Must be able to work on/direct multiple projects at one time without direct supervision and be able to handle deadlines, confidential information and interruptions in the work process; Must be able to multi-task; Must be able to work well with various levels of employees, cross-functional team members and diverse cultures; Must be able to comfortably deal with ambiguity and be able to form a cohesive and effective outcome from potentially incongruous facts (or lack thereof) and individual perspectives.

• **Licensing:** Valid Driver's License with appropriate class.

All applicants may be tested and all applicants are subject to pre-employment drug test.

How to Apply: Submit a completed CUC Employment Application, resume, and applicable supporting documents to the CUC Human Resources Department located on the 3rd Floor of the Joeten Dandan Building on Saipan, Monday through Friday, 7:30 am – 4:30 pm (Except Legal Holidays). Applicants on the island of Tinian and Rota may submit their documents to their respective CUC Administration office. Application, resume and supporting documents can also be emailed to: employment.applications@cucgov.org.

P. O. Box 501220, Third Floor, Joeten Dandan Building, Saipan, MP 96950
Tel: (670) 664-4282 • Fax: (670) 235-5131
CUC is an Equal Opportunity Provider and Employer.

COMMONWEALTH ZONING BOARD SPECIAL MEETING

February 08, 2024 | 2:00 PM
Pedro P. Tenorio Multi-Purpose Center
Susupe, Saipan
Tel: 670-234-9661/2 • Fax: 670-234-9666

AGENDA

A. **Preliminary Matters**
1. Call to Order
2. Roll Call
3. Adoption of Agenda
4. Adoption of Minutes
   i. Regular Board Meeting – December 28, 2023
   ii. Continuation of 12/28/23 meeting – January 04, 2024
5. Communications
6. Public Comments

B. **Public Hearings**
1. None

C. **Report from Zoning Administrator**
1. Operations (Permitting & Enforcement)
2. Parking requirements: Garapan Core, Garapan East, and Beach Road zoning districts
3. Updates:
   i. Zoning's Clean-Healthy-Attractive-Safe Campaign
   ii. Nuisance Abatement and Blighted Properties Maintenance Act of 2018 Regulations
   iii. Publication of the Saipan Zoning Law

D. **Report from Legal Counsel**

E. **Executive Session**

F. **Adjournment**

/s/Henry Hofschneider, Chairman

DPL
Department of Public Lands

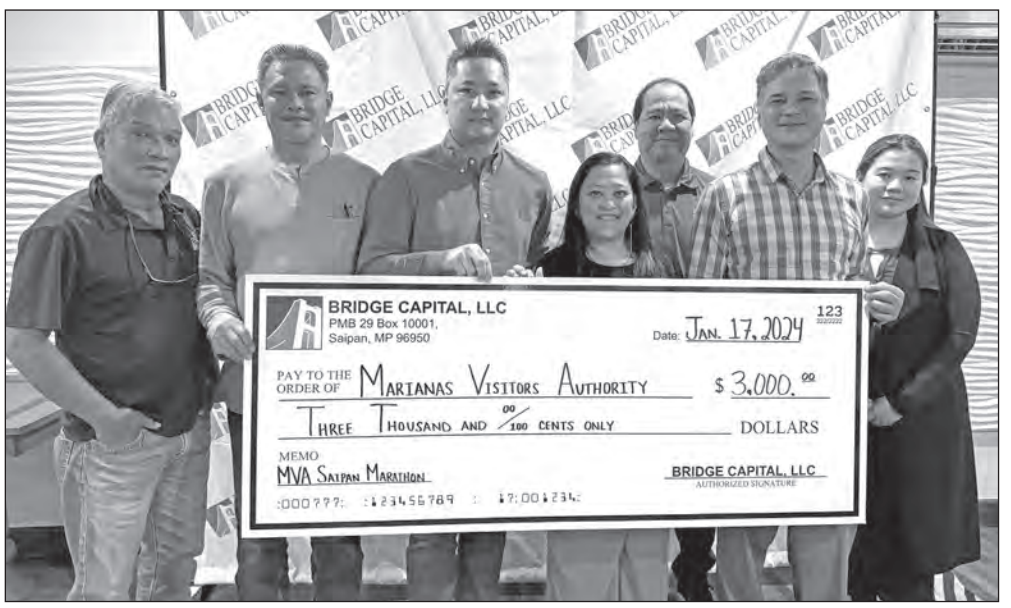
COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC LANDS
Tel. No (670) 234-3751 • Website: www.dpl.gov.mp • Email: dpl@dpl.gov.mp

PUBLIC NOTICE

This is to inform the general public that the Department of Public Lands will be closed on Friday January 26, 2024 for "Professional Development Day".

Our Office will resume its normal operations on Monday January 29, 2024.

Thank you.



GOLD SPONSOR MVA

Bridge Capital office manager Julie Ann M. Duenas, center, and Community Relations and Property Acquisition specialist Alex Palacios, second right, present a $3,000 donation in January 2024 to the Marianas Visitors Authority as a gold sponsor of Saipan Marathon 2024. From left are MVA Community Projects specialists Ray Villagomez and Ed Diaz, MVA managing director Christopher A. Concepcion, Duenas, MVA Community Projects manager Martin Duenas, Palacios, and MVA special assistant to the managing director Zenella Sablan. The marathon will be held on March 9, 2024.

SDA to offer free dental services for kids in February

A Saipan Seventh-day Adventist dental staff shows a girl how to brush her teeth properly.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

By NHORLEEN BITCO-LILLES
Special to Saipan Tribune

The Saipan Seventh-day Adventist Dental Clinic will be offering free dental services for uninsured children this February as part of a campaign called "Give Kids A Smile."

The event, to be held on Sunday, Feb. 18, 2024, from 8am to 12pm at the SDA clinic on a first-come, first-serve basis, is an opportunity for CNMI children who do not have Medicaid or other dental insurance so they could obtain oral health services such as dental exams, extractions, fillings, cleanings, and fluoride treatment.

Give Kids a Smile is a yearly dental outreach of the Saipan Seventh-day Adventist Clinic held every February. It is part of the nationwide Give Kids a Smile program that the American Dental Association has been conducting since 2002.

Between 2012 and 2020, about 200 underserved children in the CNMI have already received free oral health care at the SDA clinic.

Jocelyn Sonsona, office manager of Saipan Seventh-day Adventist Clinic, would like to invite parents to avail of this campaign.

"We invite parents to this great opportunity by bringing their children who do not have Medicaid or any dental insurance. In addition to free dental treatment, kids will receive oral kits (toothbrushes and dental floss), pencils, stickers, and oral health education from our professional staff," she said.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, school-age children who have poor oral hygiene miss more school days and have poorer grades than children with healthy teeth.

Sonsona said the SDA clinic believes providing free dental service to uninsured children helps take care of young, developing teeth to reduce plaque and prevent gum disease and tooth decay—which will improve a child's overall health.

"This will mean fewer sick days and time off from school, less time dealing with discomfort from cavities, and more days doing what they do best being a kid," she added.

For more information, the SDA clinic can be reached at (670) 234-6323 or info@saipansdadental.com.

PROCUREMENT AND SUPPLY
COMMONWEALTH HEALTHCARE CORPORATION

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL
FACILITY - GENERAL SUPPORT SERVICES (GSS)

HOUSEKEEPING SERVICES
RFQ24-CHCC/GSS- -005

The Commonwealth Healthcare Corporation (CHCC) is a public corporation and autonomous agency of the Government of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI). In accordance with its Procurement Rules and Regulations, NMIAC Subchapter 140-80.1-205(1), CHCC hereby seeks the services of qualified Contractor to Housekeeping Services to the Hospital, Outpatient Clinics, Dental, Executive Offices and Other Federal Programs thru RFP24-CHCC/GSS–005.

The Request for Proposals will be available on January 24th, 2024 online at www.chcc.health, navigate to the RFP tab on the left navigation bar, click on the URL for this RFP24-CHCC/GSS–005.

A mandatory pre proposal meeting and on-site assessment will be held on January 30th, 2024 at 9:00AM at the CHC Continuing Education Room right before the Cafeteria. The Statement of Confidentiality will be collected prior to the actual on-site assessment.

Contractors shall submit proposals and all supporting documents to Corazon P. Ada, Director, CHCC Division of Procurement and Supply Office located at the Main Administrative Building or via email at procurement.chcc@health no later than: 1000hrs (10:00 am) Chamorro Standard Time on February 26th, 2024.

/S/ ESTHER L. MUNA
CHCC CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

/S/ CORA P. ADA
DIRECTOR OF PROCUREMENT & SUPPLY

PROCUREMENT AND SUPPLY
COMMONWEALTH HEALTHCARE CORPORATION

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL
FACILITY - GENERAL SUPPORT SERVICES (GSS)

GROUND MAINTENANCE SERVICES
RFQ24-CHCC/GSS-007

The Commonwealth Healthcare Corporation (CHCC) is a public corporation and autonomous agency of the Government of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI). In accordance with its Procurement Rules and Regulations, NMIAC Subchapter 140-80.1-205(1), CHCC hereby seeks the services of qualified Contractor to provide Ground Maintenance Services thru RFP24-CHCC/GSS-007.

The Request for Proposals will be available on January 25th, 2024 online at www.chcc.health, navigate to the RFP tab on the left navigation bar, click on the URL for this RFP24-CHCC/GSS-007.

A mandatory pre proposal meeting and on-site assessment will be held on January 30th, 2024 at 9:00AM at the CHC Continuing Education Room right before the cafeteria. The Statement of Confidentiality will be collected prior to the actual on-site assessment.

Contractors shall submit proposals and all supporting documents to Corazon P. Ada, Director, CHCC Division of Procurement and Supply Office located at the Main Administrative Building or via email at procurement@chcc.health no later than: 1000hrs (10:00am) Chamorro Standard Time on February 26th, 2024.

/S/ ESTHER L. MUNA
CHCC CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

/S/ CORA P. ADA
DIRECTOR OF PROCUREMENT & SUPPLY

Commonwealth Utilities Corporation

P. O. Box 501220, Third Floor, Joeten Dandan Building, Saipan, MP 96950
Tel: (670) 664-4282 • Fax: (670) 235-5131

Job Vacancy Announcement

JVA No. 24-050
Opening Date: Monday, January 22, 2024
Closing Date: Friday, February 2, 2024

POSITION TITLE:	**Fiscal Technician, Senior**
DEPARTMENT:	**COA/Billing**
LOCATION:	**Saipan, Northern Marianas Islands, USA**
ANNUAL SALARY:	**$24,904.00 to $33,620.00 per annum, Non-Exempt**
CONTRACT:	**Not Contracted**
POSITION(S):	**One (1)**

The incumbent will be under the direct supervision of the Chief of Administration or his/her designee.
The responsibilities of the Fiscal Technician, Senior may include preparing service orders, maintaining/posting delinquency/disconnection lists, maintaining ledgers, processing and filing payroll, providing customer service including review of meter readings and updating of service orders, editing reports, establishing filing and records management systems.

Duties:

- May provide lead direction and/or supervise staff to include: prioritizing and assigning work; conducting performance evaluations; ensuring staff is trained; ensuring that employees follow policies and procedures; maintaining a healthy and safe working environment; and, making hiring, termination, and disciplinary recommendations.
- Receives, reviews and verifies vendor invoices and statements; service reports; time sheets; payroll information; and/or other payable documentation; ensures completeness and accuracy of calculations and information.
- Determines general ledger account information or expense allocation information; processes accounts payable or payroll transactions; routes check payment or wire transfer information for approval; posts accounts upon approval.
- Researches and reviews account, billing or system information; prepares reconciliations of financial data; updates and maintains account or employee data; calculates and prepares financial adjustments or account charge information.
- Assists internal and external customers with inquiries or account information; receives complaints; researches issues; provides information and explains processes and procedures; recommends resolutions to issues.
- Retrieves, files and maintains records, documents and tracking spreadsheets; processes purchase orders; prepares reports, work orders and/or audit confirmations; compiles documents and drafts correspondence.
- Performs other duties of a similar nature and level as assigned.

Minimum Requirements:
Education: Associate's Degree in Accounting or directly related field plus three (3) years of fiscal support experience; or, an equivalent combination of education and experience in successfully performing the job's essential duties such as those listed above.

Proficiency in the applications of Microsoft software – Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and Outlook.

Knowledge of: Applicable Federal, Commonwealth and local laws, codes, regulations and/or ordinances; Supervisory principles, practices and techniques (based on assignment); Customer service principles; Mathematical principles; Recordkeeping principles; Research methods; Modern office technology.

Skills in: Interpreting and applying applicable laws, codes, regulations and standards; Supervising, monitoring, training and evaluating staff (based on assignment); Receiving, reviewing, posting and reconciling fiscal data or account information; Verifying fiscal data and updating account information; Responding to inquiries, researching information and resolving issues; Performing mathematical calculations and making corrections and adjustments; Researching and preparing account adjustments and related documentation; Preparing and maintaining files, forms, correspondence, reports and records; Updating, maintaining and preparing reports and spreadsheet tracking documents; Researching account information and providing information regarding billing disputes; Organizing and maintaining records management systems; Utilizing a computer and relevant software applications; Utilizing communication and interpersonal skills as applied to interaction with coworkers, supervisor, the general public, and others to sufficiently exchange or convey information and to receive work direction.

• **Licensing:** Valid Driver's License with appropriate class.

All applicants may be tested and all applicants are subject to pre-employment drug test.

How to Apply: You may submit your completed CUC Employment Application, resume, and applicable supporting documents to the CUC Human Resources office located on the 3rd Floor of the Joeten Dandan Building on Saipan, Monday through Friday, 7:30am – 4:30pm (Except Legal Holidays). Applicants on the island of Tinian and Rota may submit their documents to their respective CUC Administration office. Application, resume, and supporting documents can also be e-mailed to: employment.applications@cucgov.org.

P. O. Box 501220, Third Floor, Joeten Dandan Building, Saipan, MP 96950
Tel: (670) 664-4282 • Fax: (670) 235-5131
CUC is an Equal Opportunity Provider and Employer.

Commonwealth Utilities Corporation

P. O. Box 501220, Third Floor, Joeten Dandan Building, Saipan, MP 96950
Tel: (670) 664-4282 • Fax: (670) 235-5131

Job Vacancy Announcement

JVA No. 24-051
Opening Date: Monday, January 22, 2024
Closing Date: Friday, February 2, 2024

POSITION TITLE:	**Fiscal Assistant: Customer Service Representative**
DEPARTMENT:	**COA/Customer Service/Call Center**
LOCATION:	**Saipan, Northern Marianas Islands, USA**
ANNUAL SALARY:	**$19,231.00 to $22,602.00 per annum, Non-Exempt**
CONTRACT:	**Not Contracted**
POSITION(S):	**One (1)**

The incumbent will be under the direct supervision of the Chief of Administration or his/her designee.

Duties:

- Updates and verifies customer account or work order information; enters and balances payment data; prepares timekeeping records; may work in the field obtaining and entering customer utility meter information, and replacing or disconnecting utility meters and services.
- Receives customer payments; balances and records cash and other payment receipts; verifies receipts against payment system data; and prepares deposits.
- Monitors and updates customer account information; researches account discrepancies or unusual meter readings; calculates payment information for past-due accounts, new installations and security deposits; reports research findings; and/or follows up on service or work order status.
- Greets customers or receives calls; responds to customer inquiries such as account balance information, payment due dates, minimum payment amounts due or general information inquiries; refers customers to appropriate resources.
- Copies and scans documents; maintains and organizes files records, reports and accounting transaction documentation.
- Updates and maintains spreadsheet reports; prepares fiscal transaction reports or other work activity reports.
- Performs other duties of a similar nature and level as assigned.

Minimum Requirements:
Education: High School Diploma or GED or ABE Program AS plus one (1) year of customer service experience.

Knowledge of: Cash handling practices (based on assignment); Customer service principles; Basic mathematical principles; Recordkeeping principles; Safety principles and safe work practices; Applicable equipment used in field utility services (based on assignment); Modern office technology; Microsoft software applications – Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and Outlook.

Skills in: Receiving, posting and reconciling payments, cash receipts or account information; Verifying and updating account or utility meter information; Providing customer service and responding to inquiries; Coordinating services with other departments or resources; Inspecting and operating field equipment related to utility usage (based on assignment); Performing basic mathematical calculations; Researching account information or discrepancies; Preparing and maintaining files, forms, reports and records; Copying and scanning documents; Updating, maintaining and preparing reports and spreadsheet tracking documents; Utilizing a computer and relevant software applications; Utilizing communication and interpersonal skills as applied to interaction with coworkers, supervisor, the general public, and others to sufficiently exchange or convey information and to receive work direction.

Licensing: Valid Driver's License with appropriate class.

All applicants may be tested and all applicants are subject to pre-employment drug test.

How to Apply: You may submit your completed CUC Employment Application, resume, and applicable supporting documents to the CUC Human Resources office located on the 3rd Floor of the Joeten Dandan Building on Saipan, Monday through Friday, 7:30am – 4:30pm (Except Legal Holidays). Applicants on the island of Tinian and Rota may submit their documents to their respective CUC Administration office. Application, resume, and supporting documents can also be e-mailed to: employment.applications@cucgov.org.

P. O. Box 501220, Third Floor, Joeten Dandan Building, Saipan, MP 96950
Tel: (670) 664-4282 • Fax: (670) 235-5131
CUC is an Equal Opportunity Provider and Employer.

US Coast Guard IPS Program bolsters maritime security in the Pacific

HONOLULU, Hawaii—The U.S. Coast Guard's International Port Security Program is making waves in strengthening maritime security across the Pacific, with representatives from Coast Guard Activities Far East recently conducting successful assessments in both Tuvalu and Taiwan.

From Dec. 12 through 18, 2023, IPS delegates collaborated with Tuvaluan officials to enhance port security in Funafuti. The visit identified areas for improvement and led to Tuvalu requesting technical assistance to improve aspects of port security. This bilateral cooperation will bolster procedures and measures against unauthorized access, unlawful interference, and security threats at the port.

In partnership with global maritime trading partners, the IPS program seeks to reduce risk to U.S. maritime interests, including U.S. ports and ships, and to facilitate secure maritime trade globally. Through reciprocal port visits, the discussion and sharing of port security best practices, and the development of mutual interests in securing ships coming to the U.S., both U.S. port security and the security of the global maritime transport systems are enhanced.

"The IPS Program is committed to working with Pacific Island partners to strengthen maritime security in the region," said Lt. Cmdr Adam Mullins, an international port security liaison officer with FEACT. "This Country Assessment visit was a valuable opportunity to identify Tuvalu's needs and develop a plan to address them. We continue to value the partnerships we have and will continue to share best practices related to port security that help ensure a safe and secure maritime transportation system."

From Oct. 24 through 26, 2023, a team from the Coast Guard FEACT and a cybersecurity specialist from Coast Guard District 14 visited Taipei and Taichung to renew relationships and foster collaboration with Taiwanese counterparts. Discussions focused on maritime cybersecurity; a growing concern due to the increased reliance on digital systems in the industry. These activities fall under the framework to increase Coast Guard cooperation outlined under the March 2021 Memorandum of Understanding between the American Institute in Taiwan and the Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office in the United States.

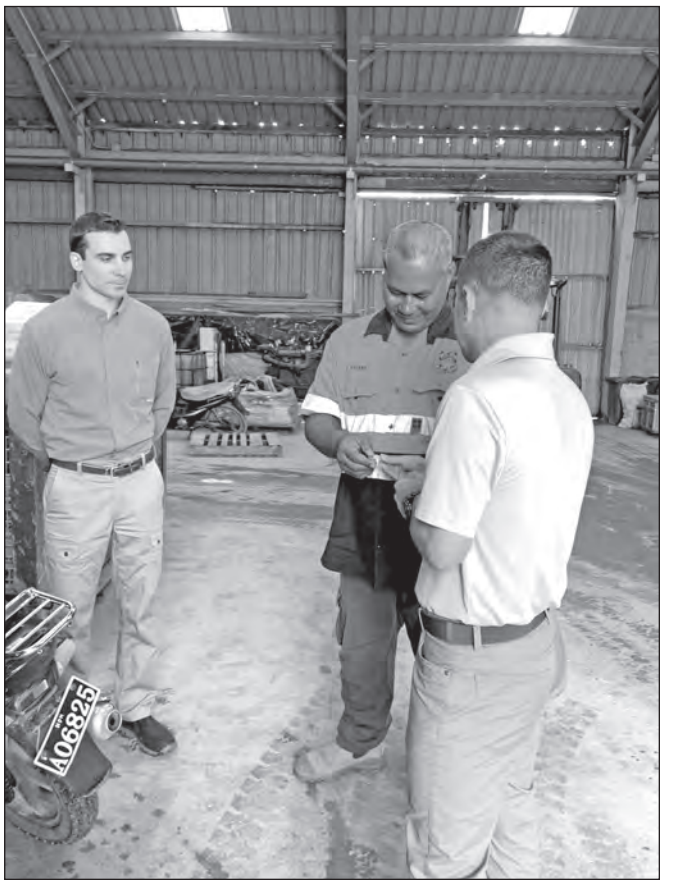
The IPS team participated in a workshop hosted by the Taiwan Institute of Economic Research and the Taiwan Maritime Ports Bureau, covering various maritime topics and featuring a District 14 Cybersecurity Specialist presentation on port cybersecurity. Additionally, meetings with port facility security officers and staff at Taichung Port aimed to strengthen compliance with the International Ship and Port Facility Security Code, a vital tool for detecting and deterring threats to maritime security.

These visits exemplify the IPS Program's dedication to enhancing global port security through reciprocal assessments, sharing best practices, and promoting collaborative efforts. By working together, the Coast Guard and its partners are creating a safer and more secure maritime environment for all.

For more information on the U.S. Coast Guard's initiatives and collaborations, visit us on DVIDS or connect with us on social media: Facebook—@USCGHawaiiPacific, Instagram—@uscghawaiipacific, X (formerly known as Twitter)—@USCGHawaiiPac. ***(USCG)***

USCG

From Dec. 12 through 18, 2023, U.S. Coast Guard's International Port Security Program delegates collaborated with Tuvaluan officials to enhance port security in Funafuti. By working together, the U.S. Coast Guard and its partners are creating a safer and more secure maritime environment for all.



Opinion

Hafa Adai!
Saipan Tribune
THE CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER
Volume XXXIV, Issue No. 18

Published daily at 2/F JP Center,
Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, CNMI
Mailing Address: PMB 34, Box 10001, Saipan, MP, 96950

Mark Rabago EDITOR
mark_rabago@saipantribune.com

MEMBER

The Associated Press | Pacific Islands News Association

EDITORIAL

A smart way to help families: Pass the expanded federal Child Tax Credit

Good, bipartisan ideas that meaningfully improve the lives of millions of Americans sometimes make it through the otherwise partisanship-plagued, soul-sapping, progress-thwarting machine called the United States Congress. This time, Republicans and Democrats have struck a $78 billion tax agreement that expands refundable child tax credits to help families with lower incomes.

Here's hoping that it gets a serious hearing in the U.S. House, where many right-wing Republicans are eager to kill it in the crib and it's looking good, having passed the Ways and Means Committee on Friday with a vote of 40 to three.

The proposal, crafted by Senate Finance Committee Chairman Ron Wyden and Ways and Means Chairman Jason Smith, builds on lessons learned during COVID, when the American Rescue Plan upped the federal Child Tax Credit from $2,000 to $3,600 for qualifying children under the age of 6, and to $3,000 for older children up to age 17. Previously, only kids 16 and younger qualified.

Most importantly, by making the credit fully refundable, families who wouldn't otherwise have qualified because their income was too low—meaning, they didn't owe any federal taxes—were finally dealt in.

The expanded credit, delivered to many via monthly advance payments, slashed child poverty as few other measures ever have. Driven by it and other measures, child poverty fell to its lowest level on record in 2021, just 5.2%.

Predictably, Congress let the benefit expire, and the credit reverted to its old amount of $2,000 per child, and old structure, whereby"virtually all children living in households in the top half of the income distribution qualify for the full credit amount," while the "vast majority of children living in households in the bottom decile of the national income distribution are completely ineligible."

Just as predictably, that led to a sharp one-year increase in child poverty, from 5.2% in 2021 to 12.4% in 2022. About one in three kids didn't get the full credit, and these were, according to Columbia's Center on Poverty and Social Policy, disproportionately "children of color, young children, children in single-parent families, children in larger families" and "children in rural areas."

Actions and inaction both have consequences. Poverty is not just lack of spending money for toys and candy; it coincides with increased risk of homelessness, hunger, inadequate educational opportunities and more.

The revived expanded credit doesn't do everything the early 2021 version did, but it ups the maximum credit over time and adjusts the rules in ways especially beneficial for struggling families, so that everyone who earns $14,000 a year or more will qualify for the full refundable credit.

Under current law, parents of three kids making as much as $34,000 still don't qualify for the whole tax boost. The Center on

See SMART on Page 9

What is there to say about that sorry, uncharismatic LOSER?...
How 'bout "Thanks for endorsing me"?
DESANTIS
MARGULIES
©2024 www.jimmymargulies.com

What to know about changes to this year's FAFSA application for college students

By ADRIANA MORGA
ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK (AP)—A new version of the federal student aid application known as the FAFSA is now available to all college applicants for the 2024-2025 school year.

The new Free Application for Federal Student Aid was designed to make it easier for students and parents to apply and to make more of them eligible for funding.

Students can usually fill out the FAFSA starting in October, but the 2024-2025 version only became available last week because the Department of Education was still working on the new form.

Students and families experienced limited availability and glitches during a soft launch last week.

As of Monday, over a million students had successfully submitted applications, according to the Department of Education. Every year, more than 17 million students fill out the FAFSA.

The relaunch brings major changes such as fewer questions, the ability to list more colleges and availability in more languages. However, the update means students will get their financial aid offers later than usual.

Here's what you need to know:

How does the FAFSA work?

The FAFSA is a free government application that uses financial information from you and your family to determine whether you can get financial aid from the federal government to pay for college.

The FAFSA will send your financial information to the schools you say you are interested in attending. It previously only allowed you to send your information to 10 schools, but the new application allows you to send your application to up to 20. Each school that admits you will send you a financial aid package. The amount of financial aid you get depends on each institution.

The application is also used to determine eligibility for other federal student aid programs, like work-study and loans, as well as state and school aid. Sometimes, private, merit-based scholarships also require FAFSA information to determine if you qualify.

When will the 2024-2025 FAFSA be available?

Starting Tuesday, the Department of Education said the FAFSA will be available to everyone 24 hours a day.

Who should fill out the FAFSA?

Anyone planning to attend college next year. Both first-time college students and returning students can apply for the FAFSA. Many decide not to apply thinking their family's income is too high to be considered, but all students are advised to fill out the application.

Students and parents can use the federal student aid estimator to get an early approximation of their financial package.

What are the key changes for the new FAFSA?

In general, the relaunch of the application is meant to make the process smoother for students and their families. The Education Department also said the relaunch will increase eligibility for financial aid for low- and middle-income students.

"Most students and families will be able to complete the process in less time and we'll see more students qualify for need-based aid," said Justin Draeger, president of the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators.

Here are the key changes:

■ **FSA IDs**

Starting this year, everyone who needs to provide information for the FAFSA must create an FSA ID.

In previous years, only the student and one parent needed to have an FSA ID. For the 2024-2025 form, anyone who needs to provide information, such as the student's spouse, biological or adoptive parent, or the parent's spouse, must have an individual FSA ID.

To create an FSA ID, contributors need their Social Security number and email address.

■ **Student Aid Index**

The new FAFSA will replace the Expected Family Contribution with a different formula called the Student Aid Index that will help determine the amount that each student can receive in financial aid.

Both formulas consider the income and assets of the student and their parents and include both taxed and untaxed income. But unlike the old formula, the new one won't benefit families with multiple students in college. The new formula will allow students from families that are not required to file federal income taxes to automatically be considered for a high financial aid amount.

■ **IRS Data Retrieval Tool**

The updated FAFSA will include fewer questions, which will make the application quicker to fill out. However, all contributors must give their consent for their IRS information to be directly imported into the FAFSA.

In previous years, it was optional to use the IRS Data Retrieval Tool. Now, if a contributor doesn't consent to having their information imported, the student will not be eligible for financial aid.

■ **More languages available**

The FAFSA will be available in the 11 most common languages. Previously it was only available in English and Spanish.

■ **More eligibility for Federal Pell Grants**

In the 2024-2025 award year, more students will be eligible to receive a federal Pell Grant. According to the Education Department, an estimated 610,000 new students will be eligible for a grant. It will also allow 1.5 million more students to receive the maximum Pell Grant award, which will bring the number of students who are eligible for the maximum award to over 5.2 million. The maximum

See WHAT on Page 9

What 2024 in America has in common with Norway in 1940

By PAUL THORNTON
Los Angeles Times

Paul Thornton is the Los Angeles *Times' letters editor.*

I was sitting in our apartment in Glendale, California, but I may as well have been on another planet that day in 1993.

My grandmother, helping me with a sixth-grade report, was vividly recalling the depredations of the Nazi occupation of Norway during World War II: the rationed bread filled with sawdust, the teachers disappeared from their classrooms, the tantrum she threw on a train to thwart her older sister's arrest by a German officer. Decades after the war, these details came to her with riveting clarity, even though she was barely a teenager when the occupation ended in May 1945.

I recall plenty from that interview with my mor mor (Norwegian for "mother's mother"), including harrowing tales of resistance. But in 2024, with American democracy frayed and misinformation running rampant, what haunts me more than anything she said is the story of her family's utter disbelief when the Nazis invaded Norway in April 1940.

> **"What I find in common is the human bias toward normalcy and the refusal to recognize unfolding threats to democracy—in my grandmother's case, from above a fjord; in ours today, from our screens."**

Her story makes me wonder how we'll react if America should tip into authoritarianism. Will we be able to recognize it?

Asking my grandmother about that moment when her country was attacked, I expected to hear tales of parachuting troops and explosions. What she told me instead was a story of confusion, denial—and, yes, hiking.

The day of the invasion, she said, radio broadcasts reported the Nazi attack. Vidkun Quisling, the leader of a marginal fascist party that had never won a seat in Norway's parliament, tried to stage a coup over the radio, but few took him seriously. The king and his government fled Oslo, the capital, without surrendering, but their grip on power was tenuous.

All of this unfolded quickly. My grandmother said confusion spread in her family and in her fjord-side community. So, she and her father hiked up a mountain.

Their village, Stamnes, was about a day's boat ride from Bergen, Norway's second-largest city. From the clifftops over the fjord, they could glance toward Bergen to see if anything was amiss. The view would be like standing on a hill in La Cañada Flintridge to see Long Beach.

What they saw, my grandmother said, shook them: Planes flew over Bergen, an exceedingly rare sight at the time. The city, a lifeline to rural western Norway, was being attacked.

Even then, with the truth plainly in the distance for them to see, they couldn't believe what was happening. Norway had maintained neutrality up to that point, but its people expected Britain to fend off Nazi aggression if it came to that. The recently deceased Norwegian queen was King George VI's aunt, after all.

Their disbelief did not defeat reality. Norway, a vibrant democracy that granted women suffrage before the U.S. and even elected its king, wouldn't be rescued from fascism until the end of World War II.

Quisling, Norway's Hitler mini-me (he even called himself the " fører"), would go on to rule an illegitimate puppet government. Though Norway didn't suffer the same destruction as, say, Poland, the country's small Jewish population was rounded up for mass murder. Concentration camps opened, and civilians endured fierce Nazi reprisals for acts of resistance.

Of course, our situation in 2024 and the Norwegian situation in 1940 are vastly different—but those differences might not reassure us. We have no external force threatening to topple our democracy. The Norwegians never elected Quisling nor anyone in his party into power.

But what I find in common is the human bias toward normalcy and the refusal to recognize unfolding threats to democracy—in my grandmother's case, from above a fjord; in ours today, from our screens.

Every time an elected leader bound by the Constitution exalts the Jan. 6 attackers, every time a lawyer argues in court that a president may be able to order a political rival murdered, I find myself on that mountain in western Norway with my mor mor, wondering if what I see is actually happening.

The jinx may have finally caught up with *Sports Illustrated*

By LEONARD GREENE
New York Daily News

It was my favorite magazine, and this was back when the mailman dropped off a stack of subscriptions in our mailbox every week.

Growing up we had *Time, Newsweek, Ebony, Jet, Black Enterprise, Reader's Digest, GQ* and *Psychology Today*.

My brother was a psych major.

My favorite by far was Sports Illustrated.

Little would excite me more when I got home from school or football practice than to see a glossy edition of the latest Sports *Illustrated* sitting on the coffee table, Dan Marino or Reggie Jackson on the cover, a spread inside about the Giants' playoff chances.

I put off doing my homework to see what Peter Gammons had to say about the Mets.

You didn't want to see your favorite player or team on the cover because of the so-called "*Sports Illustrated* jinx."

The Houston Astros broke the curse in 2017, winning the World Series despite a prediction they would win on the magazine's cover.

But that was the year they cheated, so maybe they didn't break the curse, after all.

The best *Sports Illustrated* story of all time? That's easy. April 1, 1985. "The Curious Case of Sidd Finch."

That was the fictional April Fools story about the phenom country pitcher for the Mets who could throw a baseball 168 mph. He made Doc Gooden look like he was tossing it underhanded.

I fell for the hoax hook, line and curve ball. What do you want from me? I'm a Mets fan.

Ya gotta believe.

If this sounds like the kind of reminiscing you might hear at someone's funeral, well, it is, sort of.

On Friday, the iconic magazine's owners announced that they were laying off just about the entire staff, leaving the once-proud publication on the brink of death.

How dire is the situation? A crafty magazine writer might set a scene with two out in the bottom of the ninth, and the visiting team needing a 59 yard field goal to send the basketball game into overtime.

In other words, we're in miracle and fantasy land now. This is no April Fool's joke.

In an email sent to staff Friday morning, the Arena Group, which operates the *Sports Illustrated* brand and SI related properties, said that Authentic Brands Group (ABG) has revoked its marketing license.

Because of the license revocation, the email said, "we will be laying off staff that work on the SI brand."

The magazine's union tweeted Friday that it would continue to fight for the publication of the magazine but that its future is now in the hands of Sports Illustrated's owners.

"This is another difficult day in what has been a difficult four years for *Sports Illustrated* under Arena Group … stewardship," the union said in a statement. "We are calling on ABG to ensure the continued publication of SI and allow it to serve our audience in the way it has for nearly 70 years."

SI, as we like to call it—the same way we'd use a ballplayer's nickname—was renowned for its dramatic photography showcasing the plays at the plate, the catches in the end zone, the wins at the finish line.

But what made the magazine top notch was its writing. It had the best writers, and not just the best sports writers.

If you wanted a story about who won the game, *Sports Illustrated* probably wasn't for you. But if you cared at all about the relationship an MVP still maintained with his high school coach, or the toll of tackle football on 12-year-olds, SI was all in.

And the only things better than the swimsuit issue were the letters from irate readers threatening to cancel their subscriptions over it.

My favorite letter about the swimsuit issue came from a reader who insisted the editors should be ashamed of themselves. In the next paragraph, he shifted directions, like a running back dodging a tackler.

"My wife's out of the room now," he said. "Loved the edition. Keep up the good work."

Indeed. And thanks for the wonderful ride.

SMART

From page 8

Budget and Policy Priorities says that taken together, the measures will lift around 400,000 kids out of poverty and make 3 million poor kids better off than they were before—this year alone. The numbers would get better still next year.

The deal put together by Wyden and Smith connects the child tax credit to reviving some expired business tax cuts passed during the Trump administration. While it's a bit dispiriting to think that a measure proven to lift hundreds of thousands of kids out of dire economic straits requires such a sweetener, it'll be well worth the cost. Get it done.

©2024 New York Daily News

WHAT

From page 8

federal Pell Grant award available last year was $7,395.

Does the FAFSA take inflation into account?

As part of the relaunch, the Education Department was supposed to include the most recent inflation data in the Student Aid Index. However, the department didn't update the inflation level for the new FAFSA. The application kept the inflation level from April of 2020 rather than April of 2023, the Washington Post first reported. This omission can make some students qualify for a smaller financial aid award.

The Education Department hasn't said if they will update the numbers for the 2024-2025 FAFSA. But, if they did, this could mean more delays for students, McCarthy said. Because of the relaunch, students will get their financial award offers later than usual already and if the Education Department chooses to fix the inflation numbers, it could mean further delays.

"If they do not make those updates, then you have students losing out potentially on some dollars," said Karen McCarthy, NASFAA's vice president of public policy and federal relations. "But the aid offers could conceivably be sent out from institutions a little bit earlier. So students would get the aid offers earlier, and would have more time to make enrollment decisions. So there's definitely a trade-off at play here," McCarthy said.

When can i expect to know my financial aid award?

Since the process has been delayed this year, students will begin to receive their offers later than usual. If a student fills out the application as soon as it's available, their listed colleges won't receive their information until potentially the end of January, Draeger said.

"There will be a bit of a gap and potentially delay so we ask for a little bit of patience," Draeger said.

In previous years, colleges would get information about students shortly after they started submitting the FAFSA in October. That meant students would receive their financial aid awards along with their acceptance letters in January.

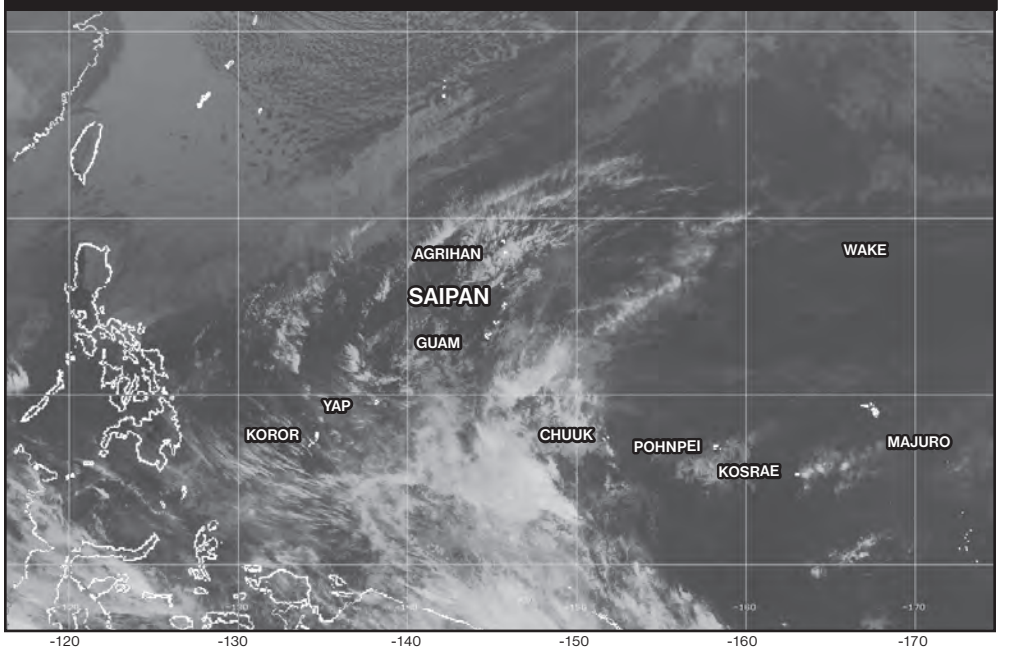
Draeger recommends that students regularly check their desired college's website for new relevant deadlines.

The Weather

5-DAY FORECAST FOR SAIPAN AND TINIAN

TODAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY
Partly cloudy. Isolated showers. northeast winds 10 to 20 mph.	Partly cloudy with a 20 percent chance of showers.	Partly cloudy with a 20 percent chance of showers.	Partly cloudy with a 20 percent chance of showers.	Breezy. Partly cloudy with a 20 percent chance of showers.
86 75°	86 75°	86 75°	86 75°	86 75°

YESTERDAY'S SATELLITE IMAGE



PICTURE TIME: 6:49 AM WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 24, 2024

Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

Doppler weather radar shows very patchy mid-level moisture but no significant showers are nearby. Satellite shows mid- and high-level clouds over the region. A shear line far to our northwest is sagging slowly southward. Surface winds are light to moderate from the NE this morning and buoys show combined seas of 5 to 7 feet.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam homepage: https://www.weather.gov/gum/

MICRONESIA		▲ ▼ °F
Guam and Rota	Partly Cloudy	85° / 78°
Palau	Partly Cloudy	83° / 77°
Yap	Partly Cloudy	83° / 78°
Chuuk	Cloudy	85° / 80°
Pohnpei	Partly Cloudy	84° / 78°
Kosrae	Sunny	84° / 78°
Majuro	Sunny	83° / 79°

DAY	SUNRISE	SUNSET
Today	6:47 AM	6:11 PM
Friday	6:46 AM	6:11 PM
Saturday	6:46 AM	6:12 PM
Sunday	6:46 AM	6:12 PM
Monday	6:46 AM	6:13 PM

DAY	MOONRISE	MOONSET	MOONRISE
Today	-	6:20 AM	5:45 PM
Friday	-	7:06 AM	6:38 PM
Saturday	-	7:48 AM	7:29 PM
Sunday	-	8:25 AM	8:17 PM
Monday	-	9:00 AM	9:03 PM

AROUND THE GLOBE		▲ ▼ °F
Auckland	Partly Cloudy/Wind	77° / 63°
Beijing	Fair	33° / 21°
Hong Kong	Partly Cloudy	48° / 41°
Honolulu	Windy	80° / 72°
London	Showers	46° / 36°
Los Angeles	Clear	67° / 50°
Manila	Fair	89° / 78°
Melbourne	Partly Cloudy	90° / 61°
Miami	Cloudy	28° / 6°
New York	Rain and Snow	39° / 34°
Osaka	Partly Cloudy	45° / 33°
Paris	Cloudy	57° / 45°
Busan	Sunny	32° / 19°
Rome	Windy	61° / 37°
Salem	Sunny	47° / 24°
San Francisco	Cloudy	59° / 53°
Seoul	Sunny	39° / 25°
Tokyo	Partly Cloudy	21° / 10°
Washington, DC	Mostly Cloudy	47° / 30°

TIDES: SAIPAN HARBOR TODAY		FEET
1:39 AM	Low Tide	-0.52
8:54 AM	High Tide	1.62
2:11 PM	Low Tide	1.06
6:44 PM	High Tide	1.62

NEWS DESK For news tips, corrections and requests for news coverage, call (670) 235-NEWS (6397), 235-2440, fax 235,3740. E-mail: editor@saipantribune.com. Website:www.saipantribune.com.

CUSTOMER SERVICE For inquiries, purchase of back issues and complaints, call (670) 235-8747, 235-2440, fax 235-3740.

SUBSCRIPTION Published Monday to Friday, Saipan Tribune offers door-to-door on-island delivery at an annual rate of $180. For additional subscription information, call (670) 235-8747 or 235-2769, or fax 235-3740.

ADVERTISING For inquiries contact (670) 235-2769. E-mail: sales@saipantribune.com

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF JANUARY 1, 2024

DEPARTURES

SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)

UA076	9:50AM	10:35AM	Daily

SAIPAN- NARITA (NRT)

UA824	7:05AM	9:45AM	1, 3, 5

GUAM-MANILA (MNL)

PR 111	5:55AM	7:55AM	Daily
UA193	7:50PM	11:50PM	2, 5 via Palau
UA183	7:55PM	9:50PM	Daily

SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)

OZ626/703	3:10AM	10:30PM	4, 7 via ICN
7C3403/2305	4:40AM	10:20PM	Daily
UA076/183	9:50AM	9:50PM	Daily via Guam
UA076/193	9:50AM	11:50PM	2, 5 via Guam, Palau

SAIPAN-INCHEON (ICN)

TW308	2:15AM	6:10AM	Daily
OZ626	3:10AM	6:55AM	4,7
7C3403	4:40AM	8:35AM	Daily
7C3405	4:35PM	8:25PM	Daily

ARRIVALS

GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN

UA174	8:00AM	8:45AM	Daily

NARITA (NRT)-SAIPAN

UA825	9:25PM	2:00AM+1	2, 4, 7

MANILA (MNL)-GUAM

UA189	00:40AM	6:30AM	3, 6
PR110	10:05PM	3:55AM+1	Daily
UA192	10:40PM	6:30AM+1	2, 5 via Palau
UA184	10:55PM	4:45AM+1	1, 3, 4, 6, 7

MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN

UA189/174	00:40AM	8:45AM+1	3, 6 via Guam
OZ702/625	12:05PM	1:40AM+1	3, 6 via ICN
UA192/174	10:40PM	8:45AM+1	2, 5 via Palau, Guam
UA184/174	10:55PM	8:45AM+1	1, 3, 4, 6,7 via Guam
7C2306/3406	11:15PM	3:30PM+1	Daily

INCHEON (ICN)-SAIPAN

7C3406	10:10AM	3:30PM	Daily
TW307	7:45PM	1:15AM+1	Daily
7C3404	10:15PM	3:35AM+1	Daily
OZ625	8:20PM	1:40AM+1	3, 6

LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); UA United Airlines; PR, Philippine Airlines; TW, T'Way Air; OZ, Asiana Airlines; 7C, Jeju Air; BX, Air Busan • ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. *(The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)*

STAR MARIANAS AIR, INC.

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF JANUARY 2, 2024

SAIPAN TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1301	SAIPAN	ROTA	08:30	09:00	Daily
1302	SAIPAN	ROTA	10:30	11:00	Daily
1303	SAIPAN	ROTA	15:30	16:00	Daily

ROTA TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
3101	ROTA	SAIPAN	9:30	10:00	Daily
3102	ROTA	SAIPAN	11:30	12:00	Saturday & Sunday
3103	ROTA	SAIPAN	13:30	14:00	Monday To Friday
3104	ROTA	SAIPAN	16:30	17:00	Daily

ROTA TO GUAM

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
3401	ROTA	GUAM	11:30	12:00	Monday To Friday

GUAM TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
4301	GUAM	ROTA	12:30	13:00	Monday To Friday

SAIPAN TO TINIAN

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1201	SAIPAN	TINIAN	7:30	7:45	Daily
1202	SAIPAN	TINIAN	8:00	8:15	Daily
1203	SAIPAN	TINIAN	9:00	9:15	Daily
1204	SAIPAN	TINIAN	10:00	10:15	Daily
1206	SAIPAN	TINIAN	14:00	14:15	Daily
1207	SAIPAN	TINIAN	15:00	15:15	Daily
1208	SAIPAN	TINIAN	16:00	16:15	Daily
1209	SAIPAN	TINIAN	17:00	17:15	Daily

TINIAN TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
2101	TINIAN	SAIPAN	8:00	8:15	Daily
2102	TINIAN	SAIPAN	8:30	8:45	Daily
2103	TINIAN	SAIPAN	9:30	9:45	Daily
2104	TINIAN	SAIPAN	10:30	10:45	Daily
2106	TINIAN	SAIPAN	14:30	14:45	Daily
2107	TINIAN	SAIPAN	15:30	15:45	Daily
2108	TINIAN	SAIPAN	16:30	16:45	Daily
2109	TINIAN	SAIPAN	17:30	17:45	Daily

Business

IRS will start simplifying its notices to taxpayers

» As agency continues modernization push

AP

A sign outside the Internal Revenue Service building is seen, May 4, 2021, in Washington. The IRS wants to rewrite its complicated letters to taxpayers and speak to people in plain English.

WASHINGTON (AP)—The IRS wants to rewrite its complicated letters to taxpayers and speak to people in plain English.

The federal tax collector is rewriting and sending out commonly received notices ahead of the 2024 tax filing season as part of its new "Simple Notice Initiative."

"Redesigned notices will be shorter, clearer and easier to understand," Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said on a Tuesday call with reporters to preview the initiative. "Taxpayers will see the difference when they open the mail and when they log into their online accounts."

The 2024 tax season begins on January 29.

More than 170 million notices are sent out annually by the IRS to taxpayers regarding credits, deductions and taxes owed. The notices are often needlessly long and filled with legal jargon—forcing many confused taxpayers to call the agency and jam up the phone lines.

Simpler notices in plain language will help people understand their tax liability and improve tax enforcement, said IRS Commissioner Daniel Werfel, who said the initiative is paid for with funding from Democrats' Inflation Reduction Act.

"This is another reason why the inflation Reduction Act funding is so important," he said.

The agency received an $80 billion infusion of cash for the IRS over 10 years under the IRA passed into law in August 2022, though some of that money has been cut back and is in constant threat of cuts.

The effort to reduce paperwork and make the IRS easier to work with is part of the agency's paperless processing initiative announced last August, which is an effort to reduce the exorbitant load of paperwork that has plagued the agency.

Under the initiative, most people will be able to submit everything but their tax returns digitally in 2024. And as the IRS pilots its new electronic free file tax return system starting in 2024, the agency will be able to process everything, including tax returns, digitally by 2025.

"We need to put more of these letters into plain language— something an average person can understand" Werfel said, which will help the agency more effectively in its collection aims.

"The clearer our notices are-for example, when a balance is due—the more rapidly and effectively those balance dues will be understood by the taxpayer and paid," Werfel said.

At United and Alaska airlines, frustration with Boeing's manufacturing problems boiling over

The leaders of United Airlines and Alaska Airlines took turns Tuesday blasting Boeing over manufacturing problems that have led to the grounding of more than 140 of their planes, with United's CEO saying his airline will consider alternatives to buying a future, larger version of the Boeing 737 Max.

"I am more than frustrated and disappointed. I am angry," Alaska Airlines CEO Ben Minicucci told "NBC Nightly News" in an interview that aired Tuesday night. "My demand on Boeing is, what are they going to do to improve their quality programs in-house?"

United CEO Scott Kirby said that Boeing needs "real action" to restore its previous reputation for quality.

Boeing said workers at its 737 factory would stop work on Thursday to hold a special session to focus on quality.

The strong and unusual criticism of Boeing by airline executives follows a Jan. 5 accident in which a panel called a door plug blew off an Alaska Boeing 737 Max 9 jetliner 16,000 feet (4,900 meters) above Oregon, leaving a gaping hole in the side of the plane.

U.S. regulators grounded most Max 9s the following day, and investigators are probing whether bolts that help hold the panel in place were missing or broke off.

United, which has been unable to use its 79 Max 9s, disclosed on Monday that it expects to lose money in the first three months of this year because of the grounding.

Kirby said on CNBC that he believes that the Max 9s could be cleared to fly again soon, "but I'm disappointed that the manufacturing challenges do keep happening at Boeing."

At times over the past few years, manufacturing flaws have held up deliveries of Max jets and a larger Boeing plane, the 787. Last year, United received 24 fewer Boeing aircraft than it expected.

United has a standing order for Max 10 jets, a larger version of the Max line. However, that model and a smaller one, the Max 7, are years behind schedule for being certified by the Federal Aviation Administration. The grounding of the Max 9 jets is likely to further complicate Boeing's drive to get the new models approved.

Kirby said the Max 10 is at least five years behind schedule and could be pushed further into the future.

"I think this is the straw—the Max 9 grounding—is probably the straw that broke the camel's back for us," he told CNBC. "We're going to at least build a plan that doesn't have the Max 10 in it."

Airlines rarely cancel orders, but sometimes they switch among various models in an order. Kirby wasn't specific about what planes United could acquire instead of the Max 10 but said the airline would talk to Boeing. He noted that there is only one other global manufacturer of such large planes—Boeing's European rival, Airbus.

Doing without the Max 10 probably means that Chicago-based United won't grow as fast as it had hoped, Kirby added.

Minicucci said Alaska Airlines, which has 59 Max 9s, had planned to order Max 10s, but he suggested that could change.

"Everything is open at this point ... we are going to do what is best for Alaska long term, in terms of fleet mix," he said.

Stan Deal, CEO of Boeing's commercial airplanes division, apologized for the Max 9 grounding and said the company is making changes.

"We have let down our airline customers and are deeply sorry for the significant disruption to them, their employees and their passengers," Deal said in a prepared statement. "We are taking action on a comprehensive plan to bring these airplanes safely back to service and to improve our quality and delivery performance."

Production workers at Boeing's 737 factory in Renton, Washington, will spend Thursday taking part in "working sessions focused on quality." The sessions will let workers "pause, evaluate what we're doing, how we're doing it and make recommendations for improvement," Deal said.

The company promises similar sessions at all its commercial-plane factories. ***(AP)***

US unions flexed their muscles last year, but membership rates fall to all-time low

Unions commanded big headlines last year, but that didn't translate into higher membership rates, according to government data released Tuesday.

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics said 10% of hourly and salaried workers were members of unions in 2023, or around 14.4 million people. That is an all-time low, down from 10.1% of workers in 2022.

The number of unionized workers in the private sector increased by 191,000 to 7.4 million last year. That includes workers at auto companies, Las Vegas hotels and Hollywood studios, all of whom went through high-profile contract negotiations in 2023.

But the percent of unionized workers in the private sector–6%--remained unchanged from the previous year, as unionization rates didn't keep pace with overall hiring.

The unionization rate for public-sector employees, including government workers, teachers and police, was far higher, at 32.5%. But that sector didn't see as much growth in employment. About 7 million public-sector workers were union members in 2023, which was unchanged from the year before.

"Union organizing gains continue to be offset by job growth in nonunion jobs and job loss in heavily unionized sectors," said Kate Bronfenbrenner, a senior lecturer and director of labor education research at Cornell University's School of Industrial and Labor Relations.

Bronfenbrenner said the data also doesn't take into account the surge in unionization at companies like Trader Joe's and Starbucks, where workers are unionizing individual stores but haven't yet reached labor agreements with their employers.

Men had a higher union membership rate last year, at 10.5%. The rate for women was 9.5%. And Black workers have a higher union membership rate, at 11.8%, than white workers, at 9.8%.

U.S. polls show growing enthusiasm for unions. In August, a Gallup poll said 67% of Americans approve of labor unions. That approval has seen a steady rise since 2009, when just 48% of Americans approved of unions, Gallup said.

The National Labor Relations Board reported 2,594 filings for union representation in its 2023 fiscal year, which ended Sept. 30. That was up 3% from 2022, and the highest number of filings since the 2015 fiscal year.

But unionizing a workplace in the U.S. can be a long and arduous process if the employer doesn't support the union. Over the last two years, Starbucks workers have voted to unionize at 370 U.S. stores, but they haven't yet negotiated a labor agreement with Starbucks.

Fights over unionization can also drag on for years in courts. The U.S. Supreme Court recently agreed to hear an appeal filed by Starbucks in a dispute with the National Labor Relations Board over union organizers who were fired nearly two years ago from a Starbucks store in Memphis, Tennessee.

Union power has also been diluted by "right-to-work" laws in 26 states, which prevent unions from compelling workers to be members as a requirement for their job.

As a result, union membership rates have been on a decades-long decline. In 1983, the first year for which comparable data are available, the U.S. union membership rate was 20.1% and nearly 18 million workers were union members, the Bureau of Labor Statistics said. ***(AP)***

Nation

Trump wins New Hampshire Republican primary

» As rematch with Biden appears increasingly likely

AP

Republican presidential candidate former President Donald Trump arrives to speak at a primary election night party in Nashua, N.H., Tuesday, Jan. 23, 2024.

MANCHESTER, N.H. (AP)—Former President Donald Trump easily won New Hampshire's primary on Tuesday, seizing command of the race for the Republican nomination and making a November rematch against President Joe Biden feel all the more inevitable.

The result was a setback for former U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley, who finished second despite investing significant time and financial resources in a state famous for its independent streak. She's the last major challenger after Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis ended his presidential bid over the weekend, allowing her to campaign as the sole alternative to Trump.

Trump's allies ramped up pressure on Haley to leave the race before the polls had closed, but Haley vowed after the results were announced to continue her campaign. Speaking to supporters, she intensified her criticism of the former president, questioning his mental acuity and pitching herself as a unifying candidate who would usher in generational change.

"This race is far from over. There are dozens of states left to go," Haley said, while some in the crowd cried, "It's not over!"

Trump, meanwhile, can now boast of being the first Republican presidential candidate to win open races in Iowa and New Hampshire since both states began leading the election calendar in 1976, a striking sign of how rapidly Republicans have rallied around him to make him their nominee for the third consecutive time.

At his victory party Tuesday night, Trump repeatedly insulted Haley and gave a far angrier speech than after his Iowa victory, when his message was one of Republican unity.

"Let's not have someone take a victory when she had a very bad night," Trump said. He added, "Just a little note to Nikki: She's not going to win."

With easy wins in both early states, Trump is demonstrating an ability to unite the GOP's factions firmly behind him. He's garnered support from the evangelical conservatives who are influential in Iowa and New Hampshire's more moderate voters, strength he hopes to replicate during the general election.

Trump posted especially strong results in the state's most conservative areas, while Haley won more liberal parts. The only areas in which Haley was leading Trump were in Democratic-leaning cities and towns such as Concord, Keene and Portsmouth.

Pat Sheridan, a 63-year-old engineer from Hampton, voted for Trump "because he did a really good job the first time."

"We need a businessman, not bureaucrats," Sheridan said.

About half of GOP primary voters said they are very or somewhat concerned that Trump is too extreme to win the general election, according to AP VoteCast, a survey of the state's electorate. Only about one-third say the same about Haley.

Still, Haley's path to becoming the GOP standard-bearer is narrowing quickly. She won't compete in a contest that awards delegates until South Carolina's Feb. 24 primary, bypassing the Feb. 8 Nevada caucuses that are widely seen as favoring Trump.

As South Carolina's former governor, Haley is hoping a strong showing there could propel her into the March 5 Super Tuesday contests. But in a deeply conservative state where Trump is exceedingly popular, those ambitions may be tough to realize and a home-state loss could prove politically devastating.

"This is just the beginning; we've got the rest of the nation," said Sandy Adams, 66, an independent from Bow who supported Haley. "I think we've got a strong candidate, and the first time we have just two candidates, and that's a great thing."

On the Democratic side, Biden won his party's primary but had to do so via a write-in effort. The Democratic National Committee voted to start its primary next month in South Carolina, but New Hampshire pushed ahead with its own contest. Biden didn't campaign or appear on the ballot but topped a series of little-known challengers.

Trump's early sweep through the Republican primary is remarkable considering he faces 91 criminal charges related to everything from seeking to overturn the 2020 presidential election to mishandling classified documents and arranging payoffs to a porn actress. He left the White House in 2021 in the grim aftermath of an insurrection at the U.S. Capitol led by his supporters who sought to stop the certification of Biden's win. And Trump was the first president to be impeached twice.

ACROSS THE NATION

Man suspected of killing 8 people in suburban Chicago was related to most of the victims, police say

CHICAGO (AP)—A man suspected of shooting and killing eight people in suburban Chicago this weekend was related to most of the victims, authorities said Tuesday, a day after the 23-year-old fatally shot himself during a confrontation with law enforcement in Texas. The Illinois authorities provided a clearer timeline of the shootings on Tuesday, saying they believe all eight people killed and a ninth person wounded were shot Sunday and Romeo Nance fled the area by that evening. But they told reporters there is no evidence of a motive yet for the killings. "We can't get inside his head," Joliet Police Chief Bill Evans told reporters. "We just don't have any clue as to why he did what he did." Investigators believe Nance first shot seven people at two relatives' homes in the city of Joliet on Sunday, then fired randomly at two men—one outside an apartment building and another on a residential street, Joliet and Will County officials said Tuesday. Police said they had not yet determined the victims' exact relationships to Nance.

New member of Mormon church leadership says it must do better to help sex abuse victims heal

The newest member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints' top governing body said every faith—including his—must do more to protect victims of sexual abuse and help facilitate a healing process. Last month, Patrick Kearon, 62, became the first new member since 2018 named to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, the body which oversees the business interests and global development of the faith widely known as the Mormon church. Speaking to The Associated Press on Tuesday, Kearon, who was raised in England and converted to the faith as an adult, outlined the global, compassionate approach he would take on a range of sensitive issues from the border crisis to the LGBTQ community. He was particularly emphatic on how he would like sex abuse victims to be cared for by the church. "There is no question in my mind that the abuse of a child or the deliberate abuse of anyone is the most heinous crime and must not be tolerated in any form," he said. ***(AP)***

Oregon jury awards $85M to 9 victims of deadly 2020 wildfires

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP)—An Oregon jury awarded $85 million Tuesday to nine victims of wildfires that ravaged the state in 2020, the latest verdict in a series of legal proceedings that are expected to put the utility PacifiCorp on the hook for billions of dollars over its liability for the deadly blazes. "We are so proud of the strength and resilience of our clients, and thankful to the jury for holding PacifiCorp accountable for what happened on Labor Day 2020—something it will never do itself," Nick Rosinia, one of the plaintiffs' attorneys, said in a statement. PacifiCorp expects post-verdict rulings and insurance payments to bring its share of the verdict to just under $80 million, the company said in a statement. "The 2020 wildfires were undeniably tragic," it said. "PacifiCorp has settled and will continue to settle all reasonable claims for actual damages under Oregon law. ... The growing threat of wildfires to communities and businesses is bigger than any one company or industry."

Biden, Harris paint Trump as freedom's enemy at an abortion rally in Virginia

MANASSAS, Va. (AP)—President Joe Biden on Tuesday condemned abortion bans that have increasingly endangered the health of pregnant women, forcing them to grow sicker before they can receive medical care, and he laid the blame on Donald Trump, his likely Republican challenger in this year's election.

"He's betting we won't hold him responsible," Biden said to a crowd of hundreds of cheering supporters. "He's betting you're going to stop caring."

"But guess what?" he added. "I'm betting he's wrong. I'm betting you won't forget."

The rally with Vice President Kamala Harris came on the same day as the Republican primary in New Hampshire, where Trump tightened his grip on his party's presidential nomination. Biden won the largely symbolic Democratic primary via a write-in campaign after he refused to appear on the ballot.

The Virginia rally demonstrated how Democrats hope to harness enduring anger over abortion restrictions to blunt his comeback bid.

Roe v. Wade was overturned by the U.S. Supreme Court less than two years ago in the case of Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization, a decision enabled by three conservative justices appointed by Trump.

"The person most responsible for taking away this freedom in America is Donald Trump," Biden said.

The speech was Biden's bluntest yet on abortion and the status of reproductive health, but it was disrupted several times by protests over Israel's war in Gaza. One person shouted "shame on you!"

"This is going to go on for a while; they got this planned," the Democratic president said as the protestors were escorted out one by one.

Biden and Harris were joined by their spouses, first lady Jill Biden and second gentleman Doug Emhoff, at Tuesday's rally. It's the first time the four of them have appeared together since the campaign began, a reflection of the importance that Democrats are putting on abortion this year.

Jill Biden told a story about a friend who became pregnant in high school, years before Roe v. Wade. The friend, she said, needed to get a psychiatric evaluation to be declared mentally unfit before she could get the abortion.

Asia

ASIAN BRIEFS

S. Korea says N. Korea has fired several cruise missiles into the sea

SEOUL, South Korea (AP)—South Korea's military says North Korea fired several cruise missiles into waters off its western coast, adding to a provocative run of weapons demonstrations in the face of deepening nuclear tensions with the United States, South Korea and Japan. South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said Wednesday that the U.S. and South Korean militaries were analyzing the launches. It did not immediately confirm the exact number of missiles fired or their specific flight details. The launches marked North Korea's second known launch event of the year, following a Jan. 14 flight test-firing of the country's first solid-fuel intermediate range ballistic missile, which reflected its efforts to advance its lineup of weapons targeting U.S. military bases in Japan and Guam. "Our military has increased surveillance and vigilance and is closely coordinating with the United States while monitoring for further signs and activity from North Korea," the Joint Chiefs of Staff said in a statement. Tensions on the Korean Peninsula have increased in recent months as North Korean leader Kim Jong Un continues to accelerate his weapons development and issue provocative threats of nuclear conflict with the United States and its Asian allies. The U.S., South Korea and Japan in response have been expanding their combined military exercises, which Kim portrays as invasion rehearsals, and sharpening their deterrence strategies built around nuclear-capable U.S. assets.

Filipino fisherman to China's coast guard on disputed shoal: 'This is Philippine territory. Go away'

MANILA, Philippines (AP)—A Filipino fishing boat captain protested on Tuesday the Chinese coast guard's aggression in the disputed South China Sea, where he asserted that Chinese officers drove him and his men away from a disputed shoal and ordered them to dump their catch in the sea. The face-to-face confrontation on Jan. 12, which Joely Saligan and his men reported to Manila's coast guard after returning from the voyage, is testing efforts by China and the Philippines to deescalate tensions around a potential Asian flashpoint. At a Jan. 17 meeting in Shanghai, Beijing and Manila agreed to take steps to ease tensions after a year of high-seas confrontations between their ships in one of the world's busiest seas. The hostilities have sparked fears of a major armed conflict that could involve Washington, Manila's longtime treaty ally. The fishermen, led by Saligan, reported to the Philippine coast guard that Chinese coast guard personnel drove them away from the disputed Scarborough Shoal off the northwestern Philippines and ordered them to dump their catch of fish and seashells. The confrontation happened on a coral outcrop that juts out of the sea like an islet at low tide. Saligan and his men took a dinghy from their mother boat and went to collect seashells and fish for food. However, they said five Chinese coast guard personnel, three of them armed with steel batons, followed by boat, landed on the islet and ordered the fishermen to leave immediately.

China formally establishes diplomatic ties with Nauru after Pacific Island nation cut Taiwan ties

BEIJING (AP)—China's Foreign Ministry said Wednesday that Beijing has formally restored diplomatic ties with Nauru after the tiny Pacific island nation cut its ties with Taiwan earlier this month. Nauru's announcement on Jan. 15 came just two days after Taiwan's presidential election and left the self-governing island republic with just 12 remaining diplomatic allies, although it enjoys strong unofficial relations with the U.S., Japan and other nations. China claims self-governing Taiwan as its territory and doesn't recognize its government or its right to diplomatic recognition, participation in global bodies such as the United Nations or any official contact with foreign political entities.

Death toll in southwestern China landslide rises to 31 while more remain missing

BEIJING (AP)—Authorities raised the confirmed death toll to 31 on Tuesday in a landslide in a remote, mountainous part of China's southwestern province of Yunnan, Chinese state media reported. The disaster struck just before 6 a.m. on Monday in the village of Liangshui in the northeastern part of Yunnan. Authorities said earlier Tuesday that a total of 44 people were either missing or had been found dead. Search and rescue operations resumed after being suspended earlier in the day due to another landslide alert. More than 1,000 rescuers were working amid freezing temperatures, with the help of excavators, drones and rescue dogs, according to the Ministry of Emergency Management. Two survivors were found Monday and were recovering at a local hospital. State news agency Xinhua, citing a preliminary investigation by local experts, said the landslide was triggered by the collapse of a steep clifftop area, with the collapsed mass measuring around 100 meters (330 feet) wide, 60 meters (200 feet) in height, and an average of 6 meters (20 feet) in thickness. It did not elaborate on what caused the initial collapse.

US congressional delegation makes first trip to Taiwan after island's presidential election

TAIPEI, Taiwan (AP)—The co-chairs of the U.S. Congressional Taiwan Caucus on Wednesday opened the first trip by U.S. lawmakers to the island where the independence-leaning Democratic Progressive Party won a third straight term in presidential elections this month. U.S. Reps. Ami Bera, a Democrat from California, and Florida Republican Mario Díaz-Balart plan to "engage with senior officials and business leaders," Bera's office said in a statement, without naming those with whom they would meet. "The aim of the trip is to reaffirm U.S. support for Taiwan following their successful democratic elections, express solidarity in their shared commitment to democratic values, and explore opportunities to further strengthen the robust economic and defense relationship between the United States and Taiwan," the statement said. China, America's chief competitor for global influence, claims Taiwan as its own territory and threatens to use force to bring it under its control. Beijing strongly condemned the election of current Vice President Lai Ching-te as Taiwan's leader and appears set to continue its policy of refusing to engage with the island's government first set down following the election of the DPP's Tsai Ing-wen in 2016.

World

Rifts within Israel resurface as the war in Gaza drags on

AP

Protesters attempt to block a street during a demonstration to demand the release of the hostages taken by Hamas militants into the Gaza Strip during the Oct. 7th attack, in Tel Aviv, Israel, Saturday Jan. 20, 2024.

TEL AVIV, Israel (AP)—Ever since Israel was attacked on Oct. 7, a main Israeli highway has been flanked by billboards preaching national unity and a ubiquitous wartime slogan: "Together we will win."

But lately those billboards have been replaced with a starkly different message: a call for immediate elections.

The mood of the Israeli public is shifting after more than 100 days of war in Gaza—and the catalyst is a rift over the polarizing leadership of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Israelis stunned by the brutal Hamas attack initially put aside their differences and rallied behind the war effort. Now old divisions that could alter the course of the war are reemerging.

As the death toll among Israeli soldiers keeps rising, and with dozens of hostages still in Gaza and Hamas still standing, more Israelis are vocally pushing back against Netanyahu and his government. The public is also increasingly divided over whether the military can simultaneously achieve Netanyahu's stated goals of destroying Hamas and freeing all the hostages.

"The Israeli public is rediscovering its political tribalism," said Nadav Eyal, a commentator for the Yediot Ahronot newspaper. "It inherently limits the decision-making process when you don't enjoy the public's trust."

Netanyahu, the country's longest-serving leader, still heads a coalition that is clinging to power despite the criticism. But opponents say he lacks a clear vision for how to get Israel out of Gaza. They believe political and personal motivations are clouding his decision-making.

The prime minister's opponents say he is beholden to ultranationalist supporters in Parliament, many of whom have called for the expulsion of Palestinians from Gaza or for Israel to resettle the area. And they point to corruption charges hanging over him as evidence that it is in his self-interest to drag out the war.

Netanyahu says he has the country's best interests in mind and that he will answer tough questions about Oct. 7—when more than 1,200 were killed and some 250 were taken hostage—after the war ends.

Turkey's parliament approves Sweden's NATO membership, lifting a key hurdle

ANKARA, Turkey (AP)—Turkish legislators on Tuesday endorsed Sweden's membership in NATO, lifting a major hurdle on the previously nonaligned country's entry into the military alliance.

Lawmakers ratified Sweden's accession protocol 287 to 55, with ruling party members saying the Nordic country's tougher stance on Kurdish militants was key to winning approval. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan also previously has linked the ratification to Turkey's desire to buy fighter jets from the U.S.

The ratification comes into effect after its publication in the Official Gazette, which was expected to be swift.

Hungary then becomes the only NATO ally not to have ratified Sweden's accession.

"Today we are one step closer to becoming a full member of NATO," Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson wrote on X, the platform formerly known as Twitter. In Washington, U.S. National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan welcomed the news, saying having Sweden in the alliance will make it "safer and stronger."

NATO-member Turkey had been delaying Sweden's membership for more than a year, accusing the country of being too lenient toward groups that Ankara regards as security threats. It sought concessions from Stockholm, including moves to counter militants.

Turkey also had been angered by a series of demonstrations by supporters of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, in Sweden as well as Quran-burning protests that roiled Muslim countries.

Sweden in the past was a "center in Europe" for the PKK, Fuat Oktay, a senior legislator in Erdogan's governing party and the head of the foreign affairs committee, told parliament.

Environment

AP

A sweeper cleans an area as smog envelops the area and reduces visibility in Lahore, Pakistan, Thursday, Jan. 11, 2024. Toxic smog has sickened tens of thousands of people in recent months.

AIR POLLUTION AND POLITICS pose cross-border challenges in South Asia

By RIAZAT BUTT
Associated Press

LAHORE, Pakistan (AP)—The air smells burnt in Lahore, a city in Pakistan's east that used to be famous for its gardens but has become infamous for its terrible air quality.

Toxic smog has sickened tens of thousands of people in recent months. Flights have been canceled. Artificial rain was deployed last December to battle smog, a national first. Nothing seems to be working.

Lahore is in an airshed, an area where pollutants from industry, transportation and other human activities get trapped because of local weather and topography so they cannot disperse easily. Airsheds also contribute to cross-border pollution. Under certain wind conditions, 30% of pollution in the Indian capital New Delhi can come from Pakistan's Punjab province, where Lahore is the capital. There are six major airsheds in South Asia, home to many of the world's worst polluted cities.

Experts are calling for greater cross-border cooperation among countries such as Pakistan, Bangladesh and India to address air pollution together rather than working in silos on a city-by-city basis. But it's a tall order when political relations in the region are fraught.

Ties between India and Pakistan are broken. Their interactions are riddled with animosity and suspicion. They have fought three wars, built up their armies and developed nuclear weapons. Travel restrictions and hostile bureaucracies largely keep people from crossing the border for leisure, study and work, although the countries make exceptions for religious pilgrimages.

"There's a recognition among the technical and scientific community that air pollution doesn't need a visa to travel across borders," said Pakistani analyst Abid Suleri, from the nonprofit Sustainable Development Policy Institute. The culprits and problems are the same on both sides of the India-Pakistan border, he said, so it makes no sense for one province to implement measures if a neighboring province across the border isn't adopting the same practices.

Regional and international forums offer opportunities for candid discussions about air pollution, even if governments aren't working together directly or publicly, Suleri said, adding that countries should treat air pollution as a year-round problem, rather than a seasonal one arriving with cold weather.

"Airshed management needs a regional plan," he said. "But 2024 is an election year in India and Pakistan, and government-to-government cooperation hasn't reached that level."

Pakistan is weeks away from voting in national parliamentary elections. So far, only the former foreign minister and political party leader Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has pledged heavy investment in climate adaptability, following record-breaking floods that killed more than 1,700 people.

In India, air pollution doesn't figure as a core issue that people would vote on, said Bhargav Krishna, a fellow at the New Delhi-based Sustainable Futures Collaborative think-tank. But the experience or impact of climate change could make people think about how they vote.

Krishna said that regional elections sometimes see air pollution-related promises. "It was a feature of every party's election manifesto in the New Delhi elections in 2020," he noted.

According to the World Bank, a regional airshed management policy would involve countries agreeing to set common air quality targets and measures that everyone can implement, meeting regularly to share their experiences and, if possible, setting common air quality standards.

The global body said almost 93% of Pakistanis are exposed to severe pollution levels. In India, it's 96% of the population. More than 1.5 billion people are exposed to high concentrations of air pollution in these two countries alone. It estimates around 220,000 deaths a year in Pakistan's Punjab can be attributed to causes related to bad air.

Gray haze hangs pall-like over Punjab's homes, mosques, schools, streets and farmland. There are 6.7 million vehicles on Lahore's roads every day. Construction, emissions and waste are rife. There is scant visibility at major intersections after dark. Smog shrouds landmarks like the Mughal-era Badshahi Mosque.

The shopping website Daraz has reported a spike in searches for air purifiers and face masks since last October, especially in Punjab.

Pulmonologist Dr. Khawar Abbas Chaudhry laments the deterioration of Lahore, which he describes as a "once beautiful" city. The hospital where he works is part of the Bill Gates-backed Evercare Group that has hospitals in the region, including India and Bangladesh, and in East Africa.

Chaudhry says he has seen a 100% increase of patients sickened with respiratory illnesses this winter. He attributes this rise to air pollution.

There are forums within Evercare to discuss issues like air pollution, and he and colleagues, including those from India, talk about smog's health impact. But this dialogue is only happening within one institution.

"Countries, governments, departments need to be involved," said Chaudhry. "They need to meet regularly. Ultimately, people need to reach out and that could put some pressure on movers and shakers on both sides of the border."

Pratima Singh, a senior research scientist at Bengaluru-based Center for Study of Science, Technology and Policy, has researched air pollution in India for over a decade.

She said South Asian countries could emulate the European Union model of collaboration to deal with pollution challenges, formalize new policies and share data and best practices.

After India launched its National Clean Air Programme in 2019, authorities quickly found it was crucial for cities to understand what was happening in surrounding areas—and the boundary kept expanding. "Everyone started realizing that airshed management is essential if we want to actually solve the problem," Singh said.

The director of Punjab's Environment Protection Department, Syed Naseem Ur Rehman Shah, is proud of local achievements to fight air pollution. Emissions from industry and brick kilns are under control, farmers can soon buy subsidized machinery to end the menace of crop stubble burning, and there is a drive toward getting electric three-wheeled tuk-tuks, motorbikes and buses on the roads, he said.

Although things are getting better, Shah said it will take time.

He has gone to India to discuss climate change and said a regional body, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, provides opportunities for countries to talk about air pollution. But he acknowledges the absence of formal cooperation at a ministerial level with India.

A screen in a monitoring room, called the Smog Cell, showed Pakistan's Air Quality Index to be higher than China's that day. Shah said the province only exceeds World Health Organization-recommended levels for PM2.5—fine particulate matter that can be inhaled. Everything else about the air quality is within parameters, he said.

His assessment is of little consolation to Pakistani poet and former ambassador Ata ul Haq Qasmi, who is in Evercare for respiratory issues exacerbated by air pollution. "If my friends aren't in hospital, they should be," he said. "You only have to step outside for it [the smog] to grab you."

Scientists spot previously unknown colonies of emperor penguins in Antarctica

By CHRISTINA LARSON
AP Science Writer

Previously unknown colonies of emperor penguins have been spotted in new satellite imagery.

Emperor penguins, considered "near threatened" with extinction, are the world's largest penguins. They raise their chicks in Antarctic winter on patches of frozen sea ice. But if the ice breaks up before the chicks have fledged, most will die.

At least some emperor penguins are moving their colonies as melting ice from climate change threatens breeding grounds, according to research released on Wednesday.

One penguin colony near Halley Bay appears to have moved around 30 kilometers (19 miles) to the east, said Peter Fretwell, a researcher at the British Antarctic Survey. He said unstable conditions beginning in 2016 had made the old location perilous.

"Emperor penguins have taken it upon themselves to try to find more stable sea ice," he said.

The four newly found colonies likely existed for many years, but scientists hadn't previously spotted them, said Fretwell. They are mostly small colonies, with less than 1,000 breeding pairs each, he said. Scientists currently know of 66 emperor penguin colonies.

The newly spotted colonies don't greatly change overall population estimates—currently less than around 300,000 breeding pairs—but they help scientists understand where penguins might be moving, said Fretwell.

It's unclear if any of the newly identified colonies could be breakaway groups from other larger colonies, said Daniel Zitterbart, a penguin researcher at the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, who was not involved in the study.

But it's clear the breeding sites are in flux and a warming world means more "penguins will be on the move," he said.

Life & Style

‘Oppenheimer’ dominates Oscar nominations, Gerwig passed over

This combination of images shows Margot Robbie in a scene from “Barbie,” left, and Cillian Murphy in a scene from “Oppenheimer.” AP

NEW YORK (AP)—After a tumultuous movie year marked by strikes and work stoppages, the Academy Awards showered nominations Tuesday on Christopher Nolan’s blockbuster biopic, “Oppenheimer,” which came away with a leading 13 nominations.

Nolan’s three-hour opus, viewed as the best picture frontrunner, received nods for best picture and Nolan’s direction; acting nominations for Cillian Murphy, Robert Downey Jr. and Emily Blunt; and multiple honors for the sweeping craft of the J. Robert Oppenheimer drama.

Though Nolan is regarded as the big-canvas auteur of his era, he’s never won an Academy Award—nor have any of his films won best picture. This, though, could be his year. Reflecting on the rarity of his film’s success—a lengthy drama dense with talk and the convulsions of history that nevertheless grossed nearly $1 billion—Nolan, in an interview Tuesday, called Oppenheimer “one of the great American stories.”

“I grew up loving Hollywood movies and believing studio filmmaking can take on anything,” said Nolan. “Seeing audiences respond to that this summer was incredibly thrilling and getting this kind of recognition from the academy, I don’t know what to say, really. It certainly confirms our faith in what studio filmmaking can be.”

The year’s biggest hit, “Barbie,” came away with a nominations haul slightly less than its partner in Barbenheimer mania. Greta Gerwig’s feminist comedy, with more than $1.4 billion in ticket sales, was nominated for eight awards, including best picture; Ryan Gosling for best supporting actor; and two best song candidates in “What Was I Made For” and “I’m Just Ken.”

Gerwig was surprisingly left out of the best director field. She was nominated for best director in 2018 for her solo directorial debut, “Lady Bird.” At the time, Gerwig was just the fifth woman nominated for the award. Since then, Chloé Zhao (“Nomadland”) and Jane Campion (“The Power of the Dog”) have won best director. Before those wins, Kathryn Bigelow (“The Hurt Locker,” in 2010) was the only woman to win the Oscar’s top filmmaking honor.

Both Yorgos Lanthimos’ Frankenstein riff “Poor Things” and Martin Scorsese’s Osage epic “Killers of the Flower Moon” were also widely celebrated, with 11 and 10 nods apiece.

Lily Gladstone, star of “Killers of the Flower Moon,” became the first Native American nominated for best actress. For the 10th time, Scorsese was nominated for best director. Leonardo DiCaprio, though, was left out of best actor. The late Robbie Robertson, who died in August, also became the first Indigenous person nominated for best score.

“It happens to be that I’m carrying this honor right now (but) it’s all so long overdue,” Gladstone said by phone from Pawhuska, Oklahoma, where she traveled to be close to her character. “It’s a real moment of restoration, placing Indigenous talent in these roles, spotlighting their humanity, their their characters, just the way that all of the sisters exist on screen, I think is shattering a lot of stereotypes people have about Indigenous women, particularly Native American women.”

“Poor Things,” a dark Victorian era fantasy about Bella Baxter’s sexual awakening, received nominations for Lanthimos’ direction, Emma Stone’s leading performance, Mark Ruffalo’s supporting performance and widespread nods for the old-school craft of its fantastical design.

The 10 films nominated for best picture were: “Oppenheimer,” “Barbie,” “Poor Things,” “Killers of the Flower Moon,” “The Holdovers,” “Maestro,” “American Fiction,” “Past Lives,” “Anatomy of a Fall” and “The Zone of Interest.”

That group, which mirrored the Producers Guild Awards nominees, went much as expected and, as critics noted, a remarkably strong collection of films. For the first time, three of the best picture nominees were directed by women: “Past Lives” by Celine Song;”Anatomy of a Fall” by Justine Triet, also nominated for best director; and Gerwig’s “Barbie.”

But surprises abounded in other categories.

The best actor category had been seen one of the most competitive. In the end, the nominees were Murphy, Paul Giamatti (“The Holdovers”), Jeffrey Wright (“American Fiction”), Bradley Cooper (“Maestro”) and Colman Domingo (“Rustin”). Domingo’s nomination, for his performance as civil rights activist Bayard Rustin, made him just the second openly gay man to be nominated for playing a gay character, following Ian McKellen for the 1998 film “Gods and Monsters.”

“American Fiction,” Cord Jefferson’s insightful drama about a frustrated novelist, had an especially good day, collecting five nominations. That included a nod for Sterling K. Brown for best supporting actor. Robert De Niro (“Killers of the Flower Moon”) rounded out that category with Downey, Gosling and Ruffalo.

Son’s girlfriend may miss out on tradition

DEAR ABBY: My son, who is in his senior year of high school, is dating a beautiful, sweet girl I’ll call “Amanda.” I’m very fond of her. This is an exciting year for them both because soon she will be shopping for her graduation gown. Amanda told me her mom has said she will have to wear her older sister’s dress. (Her sister graduated seven years ago.) Finances are tight for their family. I asked Amanda how she feels about it, and she isn’t happy.

I would love to buy her a gown. I remember being in high school and how exciting it was to be able to buy a new gown. My daughter is two years older and says that soon the girls in school will be talking about shopping for their new gowns. I really want this experience for Amanda.

The problem is, I don’t want to offend her or her mother with my offer. Should I stay out of this? Should I approach her mother? I have met her mom only a couple of times, and I don’t want to step on any toes. Even if my son and Amanda are not together by the time graduation happens, I would still want her to have a dress of her choosing and all the experiences that come with it.

OFFERING ASSISTANCE IN CANADA

DEAR OFFERING: You are a caring, thoughtful, generous woman. However, the subject of Amanda’s family’s finances is sure to be a delicate one. Do not discuss this with Amanda yet. Consider reaching out “mother-to-mother” and explaining that Amanda mentioned she might be wearing her sister’s dress for graduation.

Explain to Mom that you care about Amanda, and suggest that IF SHE WOULD ALLOW IT, you would love to take them both to lunch and to shop for a dress she might like. Tell her you would like that to be your graduation gift to Amanda or, if this is something she’d prefer to be just between the two of you adults, you would reimburse her for the expense. Then cross your fingers. You are a sweetheart.

■■■

DEAR ABBY: My oldest daughter, “Teri’s,” mother-in-law snooped into Teri’s text messages and found a cartoon I had sent of two early Colonials at a bar, one saying to the other, “I’ve been in the doghouse ever since I tried to get my mother-in-law hanged as a witch.” An argument ensued over her looking at the texts without permission. Shortly after, I received a text from her mother-in-law with a middle finger emoji.

I live in the same city the mother-in-law lives in. Teri lives far away. Sooner or later, our paths will cross, and I’m not sure what I should say or do. My text was meant as a joke—though I must admit the mother-in-law is not an easy person to get along with. I did not respond to her emoji. Actually, I blocked her number on my phone. What should I do? No one has ever given me the finger before!

DEAR ABBY

By Abigail Van Buren
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

HUMOROUS DAD IN THE SOUTH

DEAR DAD: There’s always a first time. Tell the woman you are sorry “if her feelings were hurt” and explain that the cartoon was a joke, rather than a judgment of her personally —or, when you see her, laugh about the emoji, which was probably also meant as a joke.

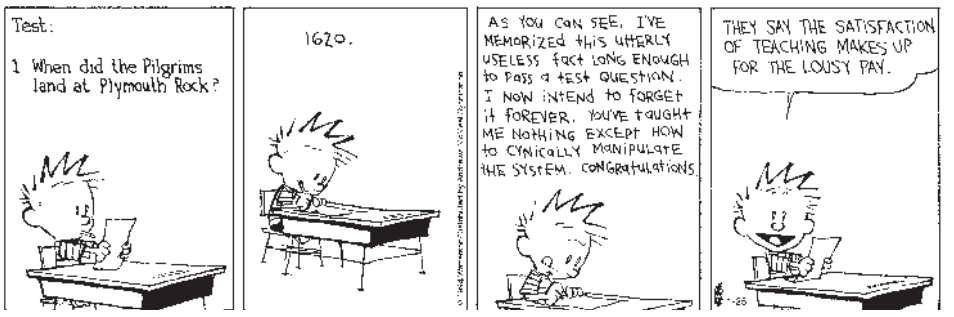
■■■

To receive a collection of Abby’s most memorable – and most frequently requested – poems and essays, send your name and mailing address, plus check or money order for $8 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby – Keepers Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Shipping and handling are included in the price.)

Pastimes

Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson

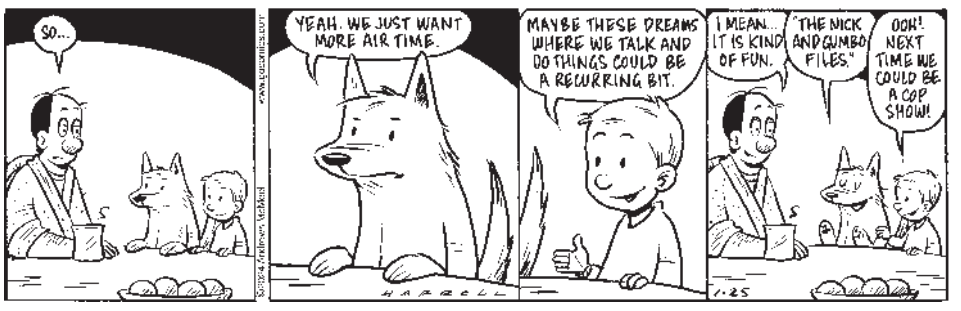

Test:
1 When did the Pilgrims land at Plymouth Rock?
1620.
AS YOU CAN SEE, I'VE MEMORIZED THIS UTTERLY USELESS FACT LONG ENOUGH TO PASS A TEST QUESTION. I NOW INTEND TO FORGET IT FOREVER. YOU'VE TAUGHT ME NOTHING EXCEPT HOW TO CYNICALLY MANIPULATE THE SYSTEM. CONGRATULATIONS
THEY SAY THE SATISFACTION OF TEACHING MAKES UP FOR THE LOUSY PAY.

Garfield®

By Jim Davis

Adam@home

By Bryan Basset


SO...
YEAH. WE JUST WANT MORE AIR TIME.
MAYBE THESE DREAMS WHERE WE TALK AND DO THINGS COULD BE A RECURRING BIT.
I MEAN... IT IS KIND OF FUN.
"THE NICK AND GUMBO FILES."
OOH! NEXT TIME WE COULD BE A COP SHOW!
1-25

The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy

CROSSWORD

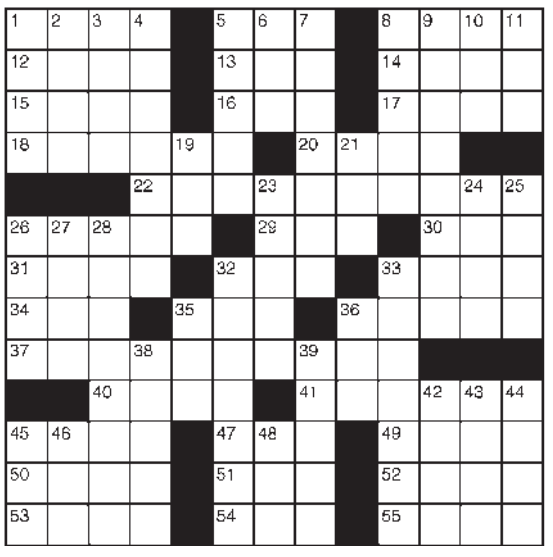
By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS
1 Roman god of love
5 Curved line
8 Unpaid TV ads (Abbr.)
12 Exceptional
13 To the — degree
14 Italian money
15 Scrambled wd.
16 Formerly called
17 Stumble
18 Story credit
20 Virgil or Wyatt
22 Ankle-length garments
26 "Speed-the-Plow" playwright
29 Actress Arthur
30 Chit
31 Persia, today
32 That guy's
33 Capri, for one
34 Polite address
35 Singer Scaggs
36 Law school newbies
37 Waiting places for cabs
40 401(k) relatives
41 Figures of speech
45 Japanese soup
47 "A spider!"
49 "Frozen" reindeer
50 Envelope abbr.
51 Pub pint
52 Tropical tuber
53 Teeny
54 McCourt memoir
55 Large amount

DOWN
1 Speedy steed
2 Oodles
3 Spoken
4 Exercise plan
5 Wing
6 Numbered rd.
7 Pizza toppings
8 — dish
9 Startle
10 "Exodus" hero
11 Soak (up)
19 Rebellion leader Turner
21 Alias abbr.
23 Spanish resort site
24 Bridge charge
25 Litigates
26 Fine spray
27 La Scala melody
28 Followers of philosopher Karl
32 Difficult position
33 Refuses to yield
35 Merit-badge org.
36 Peculiar
38 O. Henry's specialty
39 Puma alternatives
42 Track shape
43 Simple
44 Winter fall
45 Avril follower
46 Hairy Addams cousin
48 Peyton's brother

Solution time: 24 mins.

Yesterday's answer 1-25



STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call **1-900-226-5955!** 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Alicia Keys, 43; Mia Kirshner, 49; Ana Ortiz, 53; Jenifer Lewis, 67.

Happy Birthday: Physical improvements and romance are favored. With hard work and initiative comes positive change. Map out what you want to accomplish and seize the moment. Turn every day into an adventure. Be open to new beginnings, chance meetings and expanding your interests. It's your job to take responsibility for your happiness. Make personal growth, lifestyle improvements and relationships your priorities, and your life will improve significantly. Your numbers are 4, 15, 23, 34, 37, 42, 46.

ARIES *(March 21-April 19)*: Don't give in to pressure. Consider what's best for you and offer what's feasible. Distance yourself from anyone trying to manipulate you to do something that doesn't fit your agenda. Put yourself first, and recognize what is beneficial to your objective. ✪✪✪✪✪

TAURUS *(April 20-May 20)*: Expand your awareness, skills and strategies. Go directly to the source, and you'll discover any flaws before they can infiltrate your plans. Please don't be shy when it comes to how you feel. Don't waste time; find out where you stand. ✪✪

GEMINI *(May 21-June 20)*: Get together with people who have common interests. The progress you make from conversations that offer inside information will give you a reference point regarding possibilities. Don't count on anyone who has let you down in the past. ✪✪✪✪

CANCER *(June 21-July 22)*: Use your skills appropriately, but don't take on tasks you aren't skilled to handle. Call on an expert when necessary, and you'll secure a rapport with someone you can work alongside in the future. ✪✪✪

LEO *(July 23-Aug. 22)*: Follow the dots and determine where your plans lead before you begin. Taking on too much will become a costly venture that can put you in debt and affect your reputation. Put your energy into a sure thing and promise only what's feasible. ✪✪✪

VIRGO *(Aug. 23-Sept. 22)*: Consider making your space more appealing. Discuss your plans, and you'll drum up the help required for your desired change. A trip, reunion or learning expedition will help you put your skills to good use. ✪✪✪

LIBRA *(Sept. 23-Oct. 22)*: Acknowledge the changes around you. Let your actions speak for you, and you'll avoid a verbal clash. Don't put your health at risk by attending an event that can subject you to injury or illness. Deal with people you know and trust. ✪✪✪✪

SCORPIO *(Oct. 23-Nov. 21)*: Make the first move. Show confidence and tolerance moving forward. Use your ingenuity to overcome setbacks or interference. Show interest and listen attentively, and you will pick up valuable information. What you learn will encourage positive changes. ✪✪✪✪✪

SAGITTARIUS *(Nov. 22-Dec. 21)*: Put more emphasis on personal money matters, medical issues and contracts. Update paperwork, put a financial plan in place and consider how to earn more if you update your skills or qualifications. Protect against identity, property or personal theft. Consider a minimalist lifestyle. ✪✪✪✪✪

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

COPYRIGHT 2007 UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

CAPRICORN *(Dec. 22-Jan. 19)*: Take a moment to sort out your thoughts when dealing with partnerships. Refuse to let your emotions lead to overreacting or crossing boundaries that can disrupt your life, home or relationship. Focus on self-improvement, positive interaction and your happiness. ✪✪✪

AQUARIUS *(Jan. 20-Feb. 18)*: Be a diligent observer, and you'll dodge making a costly mistake. Don't buy into someone else's dream. Set high standards and refuse to let your emotions interfere with making sound decisions. Ask for what you want, learn to say no and put yourself first. ✪✪✪

PISCES *(Feb. 19-March 20)*: A situation will escalate if you don't think before acting. Take pride in how you look. Put time and effort into exercise and marketing yourself for success. An opportunity will change how you earn money and offer greater independence. ✪✪✪

Birthday Baby: You are energetic, impatient and productive. You are challenging and generous.

✪: Avoid conflicts; work behind the scenes. ✪✪: You can accomplish, but don't rely on others. ✪✪✪: Focus and you'll reach your goals. ✪✪✪✪: Aim high; start new projects. ✪✪✪✪✪: Nothing can stop you; go for gold.

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku *By Dave Green*

	4		2				3	
9	8						7	
			9		5			4
	5	1		9				
4	7					9	2	
3	2	9		1	4			5
	9		5					3
	1	2	4		7			
7		8						

Difficulty: ★★★ 1/25

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Yesterday's Answer

2	5	6	3	8	7	4	9	1
9	4	8	1	6	5	7	2	3
3	1	7	4	2	9	6	8	5
7	9	1	2	5	3	8	6	4
4	3	5	8	7	6	9	1	2
6	8	2	9	1	4	5	3	7
1	7	4	6	9	2	3	5	8
5	2	9	7	3	8	1	4	6
8	6	3	5	4	1	2	7	9

Difficulty: ★★★ 1/24

©2012 King Features Syndicate, Inc.

WONDERWORD

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them, circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the **WONDERWORD.**

BAKED CAMEMBERT Solution: 7 letters

E	T	T	E	U	G	A	B	A	L	S	A	M	I	C
S	E	C	I	P	S	O	U	R	D	O	U	G	H	R
E	E	L	P	E	C	A	N	O	I	N	O	I	B	E
E	C	P	P	L	A	T	T	E	R	T	L	R	A	A
H	H	A	A	P	R	I	C	O	T	I	I	E	C	M
C	A	S	R	R	A	O	S	G	T	E	V	D	O	Y
A	R	T	T	A	Ⓖ	T	R	N	P	N	E	I	N	C
P	C	R	Y	Ⓘ	A	I	A	I	T	I	O	C	S	R
P	U	Y	Ⓕ	R	S	R	S	O	B	W	I	H	G	A
E	T	Ⓣ	T	S	U	T	P	T	E	U	L	O	L	N
T	E	E	I	A	A	P	U	I	T	H	T	P	A	B
I	R	N	T	C	I	N	D	N	T	I	O	T	Z	E
Z	I	S	H	N	S	W	E	E	T	A	U	N	E	R
E	E	I	G	O	O	E	Y	V	P	E	A	R	E	R
R	O	S	E	M	A	R	Y	R	O	V	A	L	F	Y

©2021 Andrews McMeel Syndication www.wonderword.com 1/25

Appetizer, Apple, Apricot, Bacon, Baguette, Balsamic, Butter, Charcuterie, Cheese, Chili, Chop, Cider, Cranberry, Creamy, Flavor, Fruit, Gift, Glaze, Gooey, Grapes, Grissini, Honey, Nuts, Olive Oil, Onion, Oven, Party, Pastry, Pear, Pecan, Pistachio, Pita, Platter, Restaurant, Rosemary, Sourdough, Spice, Starter, Sweet, Toppings, Wine

Yesterday's Answer: Color

The NEW **Treasury 57** can be purchased online at www.WonderWordBooks.com, or call 1-800-642-6480. (In Canada, call 1-855-232-2367)

Pelicans set franchise record for points in a 153-124 victory over Jazz

NEW ORLEANS (AP)—CJ McCollum hit nine 3-pointers and matched a career-high with 33 points, Zion Williamson added 17 points and a career-best 11 assists and the New Orleans Pelicans set a franchise record for points in a 153-124 victory over the Utah Jazz on Tuesday night.

The Pelicans' previous scoring high was 149 points in a victory over the Sacramento Kings in October 2018.

Herb Jones scored 22 points, Brandon Ingram had 18 and Jonas Valanciunas 17 for the Pelicans, who finished with 41 assists on 60 made field goals.

McCollum shot 11 of 17 from the floor, including 9 for 13 from long distance, and the Pelicans shot 57.1% from the field (60 of 105).

Collin Sexton had 22 points and seven assists, and Simone Fontecchio added 18 points for the Jazz, who lost their third straight game.

AP

New Orleans Pelicans guard CJ McCollum (3) steals the ball from Utah Jazz forward Lauri Markkanen (23) in the first half of an NBA basketball game in New Orleans, Tuesday, Jan. 23, 2024.

KNICKS 108, NETS 103

NEW YORK (AP)—Jalen Brunson scored 30 points, Julius Randle added 30 points, nine rebounds and seven assists and New York extended its winning streak to four games with a win over Brooklyn.

New York trailed by nine points at the start the fourth quarter and outscored the Nets 10-3 over the final two minutes to seal the win.

Donte DiVincenzo scored 11 points and OG Anunoby added 10 for the Knicks.

Mikal Bridges hit a career-high seven 3-pointers and scored 36 points for Brooklyn, which blew a 10-point lead in the third quarter. Cameron Johnson scored 19 points and Cam Thomas added 14 off the bench for the Nets, who had lost the last three meetings against the Knicks.

CLIPPERS 127, LAKERS 116

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Kawhi Leonard had a triple-double, James Harden had 23 points and 10 assists and the Clippers beat the Lakers for their third straight victory and 11th win in 13 games.

Leonard had 25 points, 11 rebounds and 10 assists, including three key ones in the fourth when the Clippers were clinging to a narrow lead.

D'Angelo Russell led the Lakers with 27 points and 10 assists and Anthony Davis had 26 points and 12 rebounds with LeBron James watching from the bench.

James is day-to-day with left ankle pain. The Clippers didn't have big man Ivica Zubac, who is out for at least a month with a right calf strain.

The fourth straight road loss dropped the Lakers under .500 at 22-23.

THUNDER 111, TRAIL BLAZERS 109

OKLAHOMA CITY (AP)—Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 33 points and Jalen Williams added 19 points, including the game-winner with two seconds left, to help Oklahoma City beat Portland.

Gilgeous-Alexander intercepted a lob intended for Deandre Ayton right before the buzzer sounded, sealing Oklahoma City's seventh straight win over Portland. The Trail Blazers had lost to the Thunder by 62 points in the teams' last game.

Scoot Henderson scored 19 points and Anfernee Simons added 17 for Portland, including a 3-pointer with 29 seconds left in the game, to give the Trail Blazers a 109-106 lead.

A Williams make pulled Oklahoma City within 109-108 with 15.6 seconds remaining, but Portland turned it over on a double-dribble by guard Malcolm Brogdon. The call infuriated Trail Blazers coach Chauncey Billups, who picked up two technical fouls and was ejected.

Gilgeous-Alexander made one of two free throws to tie the score before Williams connected on a mid-range jumper in traffic to win it for the Thunder.

Oklahoma City got 13 points off the bench from Aaron Wiggins and eight points and 10 rebounds from Chet Holmgren.

NUGGETS 114, PACERS 109

INDIANAPOLIS (AP)—Nikola Jokic scored 31 points as part of his 13th triple-double of the season to help Denver sent Indiana to its third straight loss.

Jokic's final basket—a 3-pointer with 4.7 seconds left—sealed the win. The All-Star forward also had 13 rebounds and 10 assists as the Nuggets won their third straight overall and beat the Pacers for the eighth consecutive time.

Jamal Murray also scored 31 points.

Myles Turner had 22 points to lead the Pacers and Pascal Siakam added 16 points and 10 rebounds in his first home game since being traded to Indiana last week. All-Star guard Tyrese Haliburton again sat out with a strained left hamstring and already has been ruled out of Indiana's next two games.

Heat trade Lowry and draft pick to Hornets for Rozier

MIAMI (AP)—Kyle Lowry is in the final year of his contract, spent the last couple of weeks in a slump and just last week lost his spot in the Miami Heat starting lineup.

A trade seemed inevitable—and the Charlotte Hornets helped make it a reality.

Lowry was traded Tuesday by the Heat to the Hornets for Terry Rozier—someone enjoying the best season of his career—in a swap of guards that figures to be a big help for Miami in its playoff push.

"I don't even know what to say. It ain't all the way hit me," Rozier said as he got off the private flight that carried him to Miami on Tuesday night, in a clip distributed on the team's social media channels. "This is home for me. I feel good. I'm ready to get started. I'm glad to be a part of Heat Culture. Let's get it. You're going to see what all the hype's about. So be ready. Let's get to it."

The defending Eastern Conference champion Heat also are sending a first-round draft pick to the Hornets to complete the deal. The pick will be lottery-protected for 2027; otherwise, Charlotte gets the pick in 2028.

"Man, Kyle has been one of my favorite teammates, if not the favorite teammate," Heat captain Bam Adebayo said. "He's always talking about ways to get the ball. He always talks about giving me easy catches. He's been positive. He's like a brother to me and he'll continue to be my brother."

Rozier will wear jersey No. 2 for the Heat, and as the trade was being finalized the team already was working Tuesday on preparing his new uniform — just in case he's able to play when Miami plays host to Memphis on Wednesday. He wore No. 3 in Charlotte; that number is retired in Miami to honor Dwyane Wade, one of Rozier's favorite players.

"I want to thank Terry for all his efforts since coming to Charlotte," Hornets President Mitch Kupchak said. "On the court, he was a true professional and a great competitor who set a positive example for our young players. He also made himself a staple of the Charlotte community with his commitment to giving back. We wish him all the best in the future.

"The acquisition of a future first-round pick provides us an asset as we look to build long-term sustainable success around our young core of talented players. We believe adding this future pick and the additional financial flexibility from this trade will be beneficial as we continue to build our team moving forward."

Rozier is expected to be an immediate upgrade for the Heat. He is averaging 23.2 points and 6.6 assists—both career bests—in 30 games this season and is shooting a career-high 46%, as well. The trade reunites him with former Charlotte teammate Caleb Martin, who is in his third season with the Heat and said he's excited to play with Rozier again.

"Definitely a bittersweet situation, for sure," Martin said.

Lowry—a six-time All-Star and 2019 NBA champion with Toronto—had started in each of his first 35 appearances with the Heat this season, then was taken out of the starting five last week, and it didn't take long for speculation to begin that his time with Miami was running short.

He averaged 8.2 points and four assists per game for the Heat this season, turns 38 in March and is on a $29.7 million expiring contract. He struggled in his final five games with Miami, shooting 5 for 30 and averaging only two points and 3.6 assists in that span.

"Terry's a great player," Heat guard Tyler Herro said. "We appreciate Kyle and everything he's done for us, our team. Getting rid of someone who's been a part of something like this is never easy, but I think it is time, the right time to make a move and I'm excited about it."

The 29-year-old Rozier is making $23.2 million this season and is under contract for two more seasons. Charlotte is 10-31, well outside the playoff picture in the East.

Bucks fire coach Griffin after 43 games despite having one of NBA's top records

MILWAUKEE (AP)—The Milwaukee Bucks fired Adrian Griffin as coach on Tuesday after just 43 games despite having one of the league's top records midway through his first season.

"This was a difficult decision to make during the season," Bucks general manager Jon Horst said in a statement announcing the move. "We are working immediately toward hiring our next head coach. We thank Coach Griffin for his hard work and contributions to the team."

Joe Prunty, who had been an assistant coach on Griffin's staff, will serve as the Bucks' interim head coach. Horst will speak at a news conference Wednesday, before the Bucks' home game with the Cleveland Cavaliers.

Milwaukee is 30-13 to tie the Minnesota Timberwolves for the league's second-best record entering Tuesday. The Bucks are 3 1/2 games behind the Boston Celtics in the Eastern Conference.

But the dip in Milwaukee's defensive performance had raised concerns about the Bucks' viability as a championship contender even after they had acquired seven-time all-NBA guard Damian Lillard before the season to team up with two-time MVP Giannis Antetokounmpo.

The Bucks rank 22nd in the NBA in defensive rating—down from fourth a year earlier—despite having two of the NBA's top defenders in Antetokounmpo and 7-footer Brook Lopez. Antetokounmpo was named the NBA's defensive player of the year in 2020, while Lopez finished second in last season's balloting.

Milwaukee had given Griffin his first head coaching job last summer after firing Mike Budenholzer, who led the Bucks in 2021 to their first title in half a century. The Bucks had posted the most combined regular-season and playoff wins of any team during Budenholzer's tenure and had the league's best regular-season record in three of his five seasons on the job.

Budenholzer's firing came after the top-seeded Bucks were stunned 4-1 by the Miami Heat in the first round of last season's playoffs.

Chiefs' winning formula is to surround immense star power with draft steals

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP)—The Kansas City Chiefs had not even made it through two plays against Buffalo in the divisional round of the playoffs when Mike Edwards, already playing in place of injured safety Bryan Cook, clashed helmets with Bills wide receiver Stefon Diggs and had to leave their game with a concussion.

With the entire game still to go, and Bills quarterback Josh Allen on the other side, the Chiefs should have been concerned.

But in the latest example of how they've struck gold on Day 3 of the NFL draft, fourth-round pick Chamarri Conner took Edwards' place and the league's second-ranked defense never missed a beat. Kansas City held the Bills to 24 points—the 18th time in 19 games limiting an opponent to that many or fewer—and hung on for the 27-24 victory Sunday night.

"Chamarri did a heck of a job," Chiefs coach Andy Reid said this week. "He's been working in nickel and dime situations, but to come in and have that extended time in there, and make the plays he made—he sure did a nice job in there."

The Chiefs, who now head to Baltimore on Sunday for their sixth consecutive AFC championship game, will always be known for their star power. They have the NFL's reigning MVP, and arguably the face of the entire league, in quarterback Patrick Mahomes, and Travis Kelce has become just as omnipresent not only for his talent but his pop superstar girlfriend.

AP

Buffalo Bills wide receiver Khalil Shakir (10) is pulled out of bounds by Kansas City Chiefs safety Chamarri Conner (27) during the fourth quarter of an NFL AFC division playoff football game, Sunday, Jan. 21, 2024, in Orchard Park, N.Y.

Throw in All-Pro defensive tackle Chris Jones and there is no shortage of big names carrying the Chiefs deep into the playoffs.

But it takes more than a handful of high-priced stars to win in the NFL. The salary cap demands it. So the teams that are able to hit on late-round draft picks and undrafted free agents, and surround their stars with talented players on relatively paltry rookie contracts, are the ones that are best positioned to make a run at the Super Bowl.

The Chiefs quietly have done that as well as anyone.

In this past year's draft, their Day 2 picks of Rashee Rice and Wanya Morris have been crucial to winning their eighth straight AFC West title. Rice was second among rookie wide receivers in receptions and yards receiving, giving defenses a reason to pay attention to someone other than Kelce, and Morris has appeared in 14 games on the offensive line due to injuries.

Throw in Conner and that's quite a late-round draft haul.

It goes beyond this past year, though. In the previous draft, the Chiefs landed Joshua Williams in the fourth round and fellow cornerback Jaylen Watson and starting running back Isiah Pacheco in the seventh. Tight end Noah Gray and stalwart right guard Trey Smith were Day 3 picks in 2021, and cornerback L'Jarius Sneed and defensive Mike Danna the year before that.

Not a bad job by Chiefs general manager Brett Veach, who was largely responsible for picking Mahomes seven years ago.

"I'm a big Brett Veach fan," Reid said. "I told him after the game Sunday, that's on him. This game is him. It's a reflection of all the time and effort his guys have put in. That's sort of what it comes down to. They've given us good football players to coach."

There is a lot that goes into making those draft steals work.

First and foremost, scouting must be on point, and the Chiefs have a group of scouts that is the envy of the league. They've been able to unearth overlooked talent while also identifying players that fit well in their offensive and defensive schemes.

There's the coaching, of course, and the credentials of Reid and defensive coordinator Steve Spagnuolo can be put against anybody. And then there's the locker room, in this case led by Mahomes and Kelce, that breeds confidence in young players that they can contribute in a significant way no matter where they played college ball or when they were drafted.

"If somebody is getting drafted lower and assuming the whole NFL world is accurate—that he's a lower-round pick—and that player becomes something we didn't think, somebody is doing something right," Spagnuolo said. "I'm talking about the coaching and the development, so our assistant coaches I think are doing a great job. But it began with Brett Veach and his staff."

Remember, the Chiefs continually reach the AFC title game, so each draft they are picking near the end of every round.

"The great thing about Brett," Spagnuolo said, "is that he is always communicating with us on: 'What do you need? What fits for you? What kind of characteristics are you looking for?' And it's been like that from the beginning. That's why I think he's one of the best in the business, because the collaboration with players is terrific."

The result of all that work is what happened Sunday night in Buffalo. Another injury to an important player could have derailed the Kansas City defense, but a fourth-round pick seamlessly stepped into a full-time role and helped them win anyway.

Lions hoping to make more history, seek 1st road playoff win since 1957

ALLEN PARK, Mich. (AP)—The Detroit Lions have taken strides toward leaving their woeful history behind, pulling within a win of their first Super Bowl appearance.

The next step will be challenging.

Detroit plays at San Francisco on Sunday in the NFC championship game, aiming for the franchise's first road playoff win since 1957, when it beat the 49ers and went on to win the NFL title.

"We're just getting over mountains right now," defensive end Aidan Hutchinson said after helping the Lions beat Tampa Bay to advance. "It's just one mountain after another."

The next one looms large.

The top-seeded 49ers are favored to win by a touchdown, according to FanDuel Sportsbook, in their third straight NFC title game. Detroit will be playing in the game for the first time in 32 years and the second time in franchise history.

The Lions, though, do not lack confidence after beating the Los Angeles Rams in a wild-card game and the Buccaneers in the divisional round to give them 22 wins in 29 games starting with their season-ending surge in 2022.

"I don't want to say this arrogantly, but we expected to win the first game, we expected to win this game," Jared Goff said after throwing for 287 yards and two touchdowns on Sunday. "We get to go to a game we expected to be in against a really good team at their place, and we're going to come into it expecting to win.

"It'll be a tough game, but it'll be fun."

Detroit's win over the Rams ended an NFL-record, nine-game postseason losing streak that spanned 32 years. The victory over the Bucs gave the franchise two playoff wins for the first time since its championship season six-plus decades ago.

Like much of the Lions' past, their NFC championship game experience isn't positive.

With Hall of Fame running Barry Sanders, Detroit went to Washington and lost 41-10 on Jan. 12, 1992.

WHAT'S WORKING

The Lions are averaging nearly four touchdowns a game in the playoffs, moving the ball through the air and on the ground as they did with one of the league's top offenses in the regular season.

Goff is completing 74% of his passes and hasn't turned the ball over in the playoffs.

Sam LaPorta had nine receptions against the Bucs, setting an NFL record for a rookie tight end, and his 12 catches rank No. 1 among first-year players at the position in a postseason.

Jahmyr Gibbs, who had a tiebreaking 31-yard touchdown run in the fourth quarter, joined Marcus Allen (1982) and Joseph Addai (2006) as the NFL rookies with at least 80 yards rushing and receiving along with two scores in a postseason.

WHAT NEEDS HELP

Detroit had little depth at tight end behind LaPorta, which led to the team agreeing Monday to sign three-time Pro Bowl pick Zach Ertz, according to a person familiar with the deal. Ertz caught the go-ahead touchdown pass in Philadelphia's Super Bowl win over New England six years ago and set a record for catches by a tight end in a season with 116 in 2018.

Ertz was traded to Arizona during the 2021 season and asked for his release from the Cardinals earlier this season.

Tight end Brock Wright was knocked out of the Bucs game with a forearm injury, a week after James Mitchell went on injured reserve. As of Monday, that left only Anthony Firkser in the tight end room with LaPorta.

STOCK UP

Hutchinson has at least one sack in four straight games, and a total of eight during the sensational span, and at least three quarterback hits in five straight.

STOCK DOWN

Detroit's victory formation needs some work.

Goff took a knee too early on his last snap, with 14 seconds on the play clock and 37 seconds left in the game.

"We didn't handle that well on our end," Lions coach Dan Campbell acknowledged.

Tampa Bay could have called a timeout, forcing the Lions to run another play, but coach Todd Bowles chose not to use it.

"No sense in prolonging the obvious," Bowles said after the game.

INJURY REPORT

Campbell said it "doesn't look good" for Wright or guard Jonah Jackson (knee) to play at San Francisco.

Return specialist Kalif Raymond has missed two straight games with a knee injury.

KEY NUMBER

14—The Lions' franchise-record win total this season, including the playoffs.

Medvedev, Yastremska advance to Australian Open semifinals

MELBOURNE, Australia (AP)—Daniil Medvedev outlasted ninth-seeded Hubert Hurkacz 7-6 (4), 2-6, 6-3, 5-7, 6-4 on Wednesday to reach the semifinals of the Australian Open for the third time in four years.

In a grueling four-hour match containing numerous rallies of 20-plus shots, Medvedev held off a comeback attempt from Hurkacz to advance.

Medvedev will meet either Wimbledon champion Carlos Alcaraz or Olympic gold medalist Alexander Zverev, who were playing later Wednesday, for a place in the final.

Medvedev, who won the 2021 U.S. Open and is a two-time finalist in Australia, appeared on course for a more straight-forward victory when he led 4-2 in the fourth set but Hurkacz raised his game to take it to a decider.

Medvedev took the decisive break in the seventh game of the fifth and held on for victory, capped with a drop shot.

AP

Daniil Medvedev of Russia celebrates after defeating Hubert Hurkacz of Poland during their quarterfinal match at the Australian Open tennis championships at Melbourne Park, Melbourne, Australia, Wednesday, Jan. 24, 2024.

"I'm so destroyed right now," Medvedev, his hands clasped behind his head, said in his on-court interview. "I was feeling very tough physically in the send set already."

The No. 3-ranked Medvedev has had a tough run in Melbourne, including a nearly 4 1/2-hour, five-set second-round match that finished close to 4 a.m. and when he admitted he was already thinking about the flight home.

The trip home entered his mind again against Hurkacz, when he resolved to throw out the game plan and do whatever he could to turn things around.

That included reverting to a risky serve-volley strategy on some points, and standing up near the baseline to receive serves—much closer than he usually does owing to his usual deep positioning.

Earlier, Dayana Yastremska reached her first Grand Slam women's singles semifinal after beating Linda Noskova 6-3, 6-4.

The 93rd-ranked Ukrainian, who had to qualify for the main draw, wrapped up the victory in 78 minutes as she set up a match with either 12th-ranked Zheng Qinwen or Anna Kalinskaya in the last four.

The Ukrainian is only the second qualifier to reach the women's singles semis at the Australian Open in the Open era, after Christine Storey in 1978.

"It's nice to make history because at that time I was not born, I'm 2000," she said. "I'm super-happy, very tired."

Noskova beat top-ranked Iga Swiatek on her way to her first Slam quarterfinal and struck first, breaking for a 2-1 lead in the first set.

But Yastremska broke back immediately and from that moment on, Noskova was always playing catch up. The Ukrainian broke again to lead 5-2 and served out for the set. One break, in the seventh game of the second, was enough to seal victory.

"I'm really happy to be in my first semifinals," she said. "I was a little bit nervous, but at the same time tired. I think I was a little bit too emotional. Today before my match I got angry at the practice (with) my coach. But that's fine, because I could put my emotions away. Yeah, another step is done."

Adrián Beltré, Joe Mauer, Todd Helton on track for Hall of Fame election; Billy Wagner close

NEW YORK (AP) — Adrián Beltré, Joe Mauer and Todd Helton appeared on track to gain entry to baseball's Hall of Fame when results are announced Tuesday, while Billy Wagner was likely to be right around the needed 75% threshold and Gary Sheffield was projected to fall short.

Just 270 players are in the Hall, 1.3% of the approximately 20,500 who have appeared in the major leagues, according to the Elias Sports Bureau. There are another 40 executives/pioneers, 23 managers and 10 umpires enshrined, raising the membership total to 343.

"These votes are literally life-changing," said The Athletic's Jayson Stark, who has cast ballots for three decades. "I try never to forget that. That's why it's a huge responsibility."

Big Hall or small? Baseball's most divisive debate is whether a player warrants inclusion in Cooperstown.

Stark used all 10 of his available slots on this year's Baseball Writers' Association of America ballot. Boston Globe columnist Dan Shaughnessy checked just two, for Beltré and Mauer.

"I'm looking for someone who's dominant at the position they played in the era in which they played," said Shaughnessy, like Stark a winner of the Hall's BBWAA Career Excellence Award.

Beltré was the leading vote-getter at 99% in his first try, according to Ryan Thibodaux's Hall of Fame Ballot Tracker. Mauer, also on the his initial ballot, was second at 83%, and Helton was next at 82.5% in his sixth appearance.

WALSH

From page 20

Saturday] the Rotary Club of Saipan organized this polio eradication event. I hope that all of you will join me in raising awareness of Rotary's efforts to eradicate polio and help us do our part. Let's have a fun and injury-free cycling today. I will ride slowly as it is my first time to ride this course."

RCS treasurer and the event's coordinator, Charles Cepeda, also joined the race. In an interview after, he said the turnout was great with about 100 participants. "

RCS thanked its Rotarians along with president-elect Joann Aquino, Irene Holl, Catherine Attao-Toves, Laarni Zapanta, and Billy Grow; Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan; Tan Holdings president Jerry Tan who came out to race with a group of people; Triathlon Association of the CNMI; and Northern Mariana Islands Cycling Federation, along with Manny Sitchon and Jay Diyco.

LEIGH GASES

Rotarians pose for a photo at the Banzai Cliff after the Rotary Club of Saipan's End Polio Now Bike Challenge last Saturday.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Participants of the kids 400m bike course at the start and finish line in Banzai Cliff during the Rotary Club of Saipan's End Polio Now Bike Challenge last Saturday.

LADY

From page 20

leras came in the fifth inning by way of Eva Lizama. Only six hits registered for the Boleras against Lady Sufa's pitcher, Evita Maratita.

BDE had a tougher time against 670 Magas Babes, as they won by the skin of their teeth, 14-13.

BDE had a productive first inning as they scored five consecutive runs from the top of their lineup for an early lead. The Babes then scrounged up just one run to make it 1-5.

The Babes' bats came to life in the second and third inning with a total of nine runs scored for a 10-6 lead over BDE, but BDE replied quickly in the fourth. Allana Sumang, Becky Repeki, Keina Rogopes, Keyona Tudela, Jovie Omar, Tara Muna, Levayna Ngirablosch, and Beatrice all scored to overtake the lead, 14-10.

The Babes then scored three more in the fifth to get within one, 13-14, but with the last at-bat as the home team, they failed to deliver in the final inning.

In the game between Lady Blue Jays and Bat & Boojie, the Ladies managed to slip past by just one run, 3-2. Kiana "Baby K" Camacho hit the game winning two-RBI homer in their last at-bat, as the Bat & Boojie's tried to walk it off in the last inning.

Lady Blue Jays pitcher Angel Deleon Guerrero held them down though as only two runs scored from Rosie Saralu and Janica Iguel for Bat & Boojie.

Results of the men's division will be posted in the next issues of *Saipan Tribune*.

KEVIN

From page 20

with an average of .625, from 15 hits in 24 at-bats; and third is Reds' Hector Efraim at a .563 batting average from nine hits out of 16 plate appearances.

In other batting columns, James Benavente has scored the most runs at 19; Derek Aguon is next with 18; Pete Sablan has 14; Alvin Takai, Audie Maratita, Cartfield Sablan, and Jerome Delos Santos have 13 each; Jun Salalila has 12; and Ed Manibusan and Glen Camacho have 11 each.

Maratita has the most doubles with seven; Ton Pangelinan has four; and Alvin Takai, Ben Pangelinan, Bruce Norita, Cris George, Ed Manibusan, Eric Palacios, Jess Takawo, J-Boy Deleon Guerrero, Jun Salalila, J.J. Teigita, Mario Aguon, Robert Bansil, and Shine Tenorio have two each.

Cartfield Sablan Ed Manibusan, Richard Quitugua, Dennis Cruz, Derek Aguon, and Mike Techur have hit two triples each, while nine players are tied with one each.

Robert Bansil has hit the lone home run, while Maratita and J-Boy Deleon Guerrero both hit an inside-the-park homer.

Maratita also leads the most RBI column at 17; J-Boy DL-Guerrero and Shine Tenorio have 11 each; Eric Palacios and Richard Quitugua collected 10 each; Bruce Norita and Pete Tomokane have nine each; and Derek Aguon has eight.

Pelicans set franchise record for points in a 153-124 victory over Jazz.

PAGE 17

Saipan Tribune
Sports

Medvedev, Yastremska advance to Australian Open semifinals.

PAGE 19

Walsh, Seman tops kids bike course

By LEIGH GASES
leigh_gases@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The kiddos had their fun too in the Inaugural Rotary Club of Saipan's End Polio Now Cycling Challenge last Saturday morning, with Olivia Walsh topping the girls division, while Vince Seman Jr. zoomed into first in the boys division.

The kids enjoyed a quick 400m ride along the windy Banzai Road strip with their parents cheering them on, as Walsh outraced them all with a time of 1:59. Seman was first in the boys division and second overall when he clocked in at 2:01.

Second to Walsh in the 6-8 age group was Mika McKagan at 2:25. Also in the 6-8 age category after Seman was Brayden Brennfleck at 2:03; third was Declan Spaeth at 2:06; Luke Seman was fourth at 2:40; and fifth was Huck Bauer at 2:37.

In the 9-12 girls age group, Princess Gariguez was first at 2:46, followed by Lovel Spaeth at 2:50. In the 9-12 boy age group, Zhoefet Cellona was first at 2:40; second was P.J. Seman with 2:42; third was Beau Bauer with a time of 2:52; Cooper Fong came in next at 2:54; Jackson Koning clocked in at 3:01; and Gabriel Walsh came in at 3:30.

Olivia, at 8 years old, was the youngest runner to complete the Run Saipan Trinity Race. The youthful energy propelled her to top the bike race just a week later. The Saipan International School student said in an interview about the race, "I felt a little nervous. It was very windy, but I tried my best. I had fun riding with my friends."

Event cause: 'End Polio Now'

The event, which was the first of its kind for the Rotary Club of Saipan, was to raise funds for Rotarians' world-wide effort to end polio. Polio is a disease that children under 5 years old are susceptible to, which once infected causes paralysis.

RCS also welcomed Rotary International District 2750 governor Yoichiro Miyazaki to the island, who joined the bike challenge as well.

In a statement during the bike race, Miyazaki, who came in with a time of 39:50 in the Road Bike 20-km short course, said, "Rotary has been working to eradicate polio for more than 35 years. We are very close to achieving our goal of ridding the world of polio. Polio eradication is Rotary's top priority. I have raised over 20 million yen by riding my road bike 2,800 kilometers across Japan on World Polio Day in October 2022."

He added, "Today, [last

See WALSH on Page 19

LEIGH GASES

Rotary International District 2750 governor Yoichiro Miyazaki crosses the finish line of the Rotary Club of Saipan's End Polio Now Bike Challenge at the Banzai Cliff last Saturday.

Lady Sufa pummels Boleras, 11-1

By LEIGH GASES
leigh_gases@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Lady Sufa pummeled Boleras, 11-1, in the 2024 Budweiser Belau Amateur Softball Association women's division last Sunday at the Dandan Softball Field.

Lady Sufa exploded in the second as they scored all of their runs in that inning. Hit after hit became an RBI opportunity as Boleras' defense and pitching took a beating.

From middle of the pack Miyah Duenas to Evita Maratita at the bottom of the lineup, to the top and then back down again, Lady Sufa scored 11 runs against Boleras pitching staff.

The lone run for the Bo-

See LADY on Page 19

LEIGH GASES

In this file photo, Lady Sufa's Ashley Angui swings at a pitch during one of their games in the 2024 Budweiser Belau Amateur Softball Association women's division at the Dandan Softball Field.

Kevin Kapileo is current strikeouts king

By LEIGH GASES
leigh_gases@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

As of Jan. 22, Blue Jays pitcher Kevin Kapileo is the strikeout king in the 2023 Tan Holdings-SBL Masters League.

Kapileo has a total of 37 strikeouts and has led the league since it first started last November. A distant second is Jeff Cruz at 19; Pete Sablan and Joe Kapileo have 13 each; Bill Camacho and Tony Flores have 12; Tony Pangelinan struck out 10; and Dung Tenorio and J.J. Laniyo have nine each.

The leading pitcher is Pirates' J.J. Laniyo with an ERA of 0.97, in three games played and 7.2 innings pitched, with a record of two wins and no losses, one ER, and only hits against him.

Second is Dodgers' Jeff Cruz with a 1.08 ERA; three wins; three games and 13 innings pitched; two ER, and seven hits. Third is Pete Sablan from the Pirates has a 1.56 ERA; two wins; seven hits; two ER; and has pitched three games in 13 innings.

From the bump to 90 feet in the batter's box, Dodgers' Glen Camacho leads all sluggers with a batting average of .632. He had 12 hits from 19 at-bats. Second is Pirates' Audie Maratita

See KEVIN on Page 19

LEIGH GASES

Blue Jays pitcher Kevin Kapileo throws a pitch against the Reds last Tuesday night in the 2023 Tan Holdings-SBL Masters League at the Francisco "Tan Ko" Palacios Baseball Field.